

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY



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MURRAY AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,  
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

# THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN DIVINITY HALL,

IN ITS

*CHANGES AND ENLARGEMENTS FOR ONE  
HUNDRED AND FORTY YEARS.*

## A Memorial

OF ITS LOCALITIES, PROFESSORS, AND TRAINING SYSTEMS,  
AND OF THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF STUDENTS  
BY PRESBYTERIES AND COMMITTEES.

BY THE

REV. P. LANDRETH,

AUTHOR OF 'STUDIES AND SKETCHES IN MODERN LITERATURE,' 'MEMOIR OF  
DR. ADAM THOMSON,' ETC. ETC.

EDINBURGH:  
WILLIAM OLIPHANT AND CO.

1876.

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9087  
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EMMANUEL



*THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED*

TO THE

REV. DR. M'GAVIN,

WHO,

AS MODERATOR OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN SYNOD IN 1875,

WHEN THE

RE-MODELLING, ENLARGEMENT, AND RE-EQUIPMENT

OF THE DIVINITY HALL WERE DECREED,

CLOSED THE FINAL SESSION OF THE OLD HALL, AND WELCOMED

THE FORTHCOMING INSTITUTION,

*In an Address*

EXQUISITELY APPROPRIATE, IMPRESSIVE, AND GRACEFUL.



## P R E F A C E.

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THE writer takes for granted that the *subject* of this volume is interesting, and will at present be seasonable, to readers belonging to the United Presbyterian Church ; but he makes no assumption about his own call and qualifications for its adequate treatment. No other chronicler or critic of the Divinity Hall's 140 years' life and labours has as yet, however, given the slightest sign of making an appearance ; and the writer is released from the fear of jostling against a more competent competitor.

For many years he has earnestly considered the merits and defects of that theological tuition which was hitherto provided in the United Presbyterian Hall, but which is henceforth to be superseded by a more comprehensive and liberal system.

The Hall had just received from the Synod its new constitution, and the three additional professors — who, along with their senior brethren,

were to form the enlarged Theological Faculty—and the Church had just begun to cherish bright hopes of the start which in November the new institution would make, when the sudden death of Dr. Eadie was announced. That this sad event is incalculably, and will, for many years to come, be irreparably calamitous to the new Hall, cannot be doubted by any who knew the Doctor's remarkable scholarship, ancient and modern, sacred and secular; his strong and versatile intellect, and his prodigious appetite for hard and continuous work; though under the pressure of all his studies he was unexhausted, and ever maintained his natural cheerfulness and buoyancy. His removal leaves only one of the former professors to take his daily share—a 'lion's share'—in the labours of the Hall's lengthened session, for, whilst there is still the venerable Dr. Harper, yet he—both as Principal and on account of his advanced years—cannot be expected to remain in harness and to perform those teaching functions which once yielded such profit to pupils and honour to himself; and though—as the Church will gratefully reflect—the surviving Professor be Dr. John Cairns, the *decus et tutamen* of the old as well as of the new seminary, the loss of Dr. Eadie will be bitterly felt, long after his vacant chair has been occupied,

and until his successor shall have become—in attainments as well as in capacities—his equal. A scholar like Eadie has no gourd's growth; it took more than thirty years of such studies as his to amass, upon the acquirements which he possessed when entering upon his professorship, those magnificent yet ever-available stores of learning, which have not been permitted to pass from the old into the new Hall.

The writer regrets much that no room could be found in this little volume for his chapter on 'The distinguished divines and preachers, scholars, poets, and literary men trained within the Divinity Hall.' The Hall may not have the chief credit for their intellectual development,—just as the Scottish Presbyterian pastorate is not entitled to boast of furnishing scope, means, and stimulus for high intellectual work of an *extra*-pastoral kind. Still, the Hall has sent forth men whose admirable productions will stand the test of searching criticism. The theological works of not a few of the Professors—Lawson, Dick, Brown, Balmer, Duncan, M'Michael, Lindsay, and Eadie (who also gained high distinction as sermon-writers)—will long continue to be prized. Many of the published volumes of sermons have very high merits,—such as the volumes of Dr. Stark, Dr. Heugh, Dr. Henderson,

Dr. William Anderson, Dr. King, Dr. Smart, Dr. Waugh, Dr. James Peddie, Henry Angus (of Aberdeen), John Riddell, Dr. R. T. Jeffrey, Dr. Alex. M'Leod, Fergus Ferguson, and Dr. Simpson. The collection of sermons by Dr. John Ker had a transcendent power and beauty, which won for them such a sale among Oxford and Cambridge men as never before attended the issue of any Scottish sermons, though bearing the name of Chalmers, Guthrie, Candlish, or Norman Macleod. A volume recently published by Dr. J. B. Johnston shows remarkable vigour, keenness, and freshness, along with a rare unexpectedness of thought and illustration. A younger brother, Dr. R. Johnston, is the author of two volumes of admirable exegesis ; and certainly these form such attestations to his capacity for occupying the late Dr. Eadie's chair as few, if any, candidates can exhibit. In the biographical department our denominational literature is specially rich, and the numerous *Memoirs* that have been prefixed to separate volumes of posthumous discourses or other 'Remains' are admirable delineations. The master-strokes and touches in literary portraiture, and in the broader sketching of an age or a Church, by Dr. Andrew Thomson, Dr. John Cairns, and Mr. Grosart, are inimitable. In biography, the

Rev. William Graham of Liverpool holds one of the highest places, as readers of his genial and graphic *Life of Dr. John M'Farlane* will acknowledge ; but his power for representing great Church eras, crises, and episodes, and the bold characters that figure in these, would justify his devotion to more ambitious subjects, and adorn a Church History Chair. In general literature, and on ecclesiastical subjects, as well as on all questions relating to school and college education in Scotland, Dr. James Taylor has displayed a powerful yet swift-moving intellect, furnished with extraordinary loads of all kinds of knowledge ; yet ever ready to deal with these in the most masterly way, and in a moment to apply facts as lessons. Dr. M'Kerrow and Dr. M'Kelvie have represented the Past of our Church with a power, accuracy, and skill which will always secure the pre-eminence for their works, as these had the precedence ; and the only historical quality in which they were somewhat deficient was a pictorial style. What exquisite literary productions might have come from Dr. William Robertson of Irvine, had his tongue been an organ less wonderfully facile, 'cunning,' and ever-available for the expression of his reflective, imaginative, and emotional moods, so that he had been led to have more frequent

recourse to his pen! Though the 'swallow has' often 'found for herself a nest' near altars and in churches, yet a Divinity Hall scarcely seems a place for the rearing of *poets*. Our Hall, however, has sent forth Dr. MacGill, an unrivalled translator of the old Latin hymns; and Mr. Jacque, whose original poetry has, in a rare degree, the 'accomplishment of verse,' and who will rank with Michael Bruce and Robert Pollok.

What the Hall has done in philosophy will be indicated by the names of Ballantine, Selkirk Scott, and Cairns, and by the University chair adorned by Professor Calderwood. Then, last to be here mentioned, of all that were trained in the Hall, is the Rev. George Gilfillan, whose commanding genius, and its constant exercise for more than thirty years, would—along with an estimate, or even a bare list, of his splendid productions in poetry, criticism, history, and theology—have required a whole chapter.

*July 4, 1876.*



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## CHAPTER I.

Determination of the United Presbyterian Church in favour of an educated ministry—Transmitted from the first Seceders, in an unbroken line, through all their successors, in spite of the breaches and divisions occurring in the Secession Church—The ‘Four Fathers,’ in November 1736, appoint one of their number to be Theological Professor—Other Separatists not often marked by this distinction of zeal for a learned ministry—The English Nonconformists as contemporaries of the Scottish Seceders—The exigencies of the latter might have reconciled them to a half-educated ministry—How John Wesley might have responded to the appeals from all parts of the country for preaching—The leading aim of the Seceders, and its realization through the labours of their Divinity Hall.

THE United Presbyterian Church, like the sects of the Secession and the Relief which form her ancestry, is resolute to have a ministry distinguished, not only for evangelical purity and zeal, but for liberal culture and theological learning. She hates either the reality or the affectation of a sacerdotal caste, but desires to have a highly intellectual and accomplished clergy, that shall be capable of representing the majesty and mercy, the power and adaptation of Christ’s gospel to all classes of men, and to every order of their understanding, whether

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low or lofty, rude or refined. Her candidates for the sacred office she may 'find at the plough;' but as she cannot throw over them any 'prophet's mantle' that might give inspiration, she is determined to subject them to a process of comprehensive tuition, secular and sacred, before she admits them into her pulpit.

This characteristic our Church has inherited from the first few Seceders and from their fast-increasing descendants, who, at every stage of their history, aimed at keeping up a high standard of ministerial qualifications. We can easily trace it, as a denominational peculiarity, in a direct and unbroken line, from November 1876, when the re-modelled and enlarged Divinity Hall of the United Presbyterian Church will open its first winter session of five months, and enter upon its labours, back to November 1736, when the 'Associate Presbytery,' consisting of the 'Four Fathers of the Secession,' appointed one of their number, the Rev. William Wilson of Perth, to the post of Theological Tutor to the young men who might wish to study for the ministry in connection with the recently-organized Secession. The interval between those dates is an hundred and forty years; and, during so long a term, a less vital and potent peculiarity would have yielded to decay or to change. A steady passion,

along with an emphatic decision in favour of literary, philosophical, and theological culture, pervaded that young Church throughout all that period ; and twenty-one professors embodied and carried into effect that resolution for elaborate training. During the course of 140 years, and the succession of twenty-one gifted and accomplished professors, the Divinity Hall furnished the Secession Church with a learned and efficient ministry.

Other peculiarities survive to prove the identity of our large denomination with the Church of Erskine and Gillespie ; but this characteristic, found throughout the 140 years, should not be overlooked.

That it belonged to the early Seceders, and to their immediate successors, is more surprising than that it now belongs to the United Presbyterian Church, which is placed in far more favourable circumstances. It would be a shame, as well as a wonder, if a Church so large, flourishing, and wealthy as the United Presbyterian, were, in the present day, indifferent about the rearing of a ministry thoroughly taught and trained. There were, in the position of the early Seceders, exigencies which might have led them to be reconciled to a half-educated ministry. The few 'Fathers of the Secession' had appeals from all parts of the

#### 4 *The United Presbyterian Divinity Hall.*

kingdom, urging that a supply of preaching and, before long, of pastoral services, should be granted. They were at once asked to multiply themselves into a host, for the 'harvest was plenteous, but the labourers few,' and many congregations all over Scotland were clamorous for the evangelical testimony of the Secession. The Seceders, therefore, in answer to the demand, might have felt themselves constrained either to sanction a rough and ready training for all who aspired to be Secession preachers; or, while providing full education for a few, as for *the clergy*, to adopt the expedient of supplementing this small professional company by a large force of *volunteer laymen*, hastily and rudely drilled, for addressing the congregations that were quitting the communion of the Established Church. John Wesley, if he had been one of the four leaders of the secession from the Church of Scotland, would, in spite of his being a University man of high attainment and of still higher promise, have promptly laid hold of the boldest and most enthusiastic of his 'converts,' and sent them forth, though they were untaught and uninfluenced by any other book than the Bible, to preach to the congregations that had long been dissatisfied with those dull and inane moral essays which the Established clergy called 'sermons.' Wesley would soon have found,



licensed, and ordained preachers and pastors for the congregations that from all quarters of the country cried out to the 'Associate Presbytery' for evangelical instruction and guidance. It cannot be doubted that the sagacious and energetic apostle of Methodism would, if he had been in the place of Ebenezer Erskine and the first Seceders, have made his system largely successful even in Scotland.

So, the 'Four Fathers of the Secession,' when leaving behind them in the Church of Scotland all the noblemen, squires, and lawyers, whom the Stuart Restoration and the Orange Revolution had not already withdrawn, and when finding their audiences wholly composed of the larger and lower classes of the community, might have concluded that these would not only be satisfied, but delighted, with a comparatively rude and loose style of pulpit oratory, and with a grade of ministers that had passed through no course of university training or of intellectual culture. It was, therefore, a most honourable distinction for the early Seceders and their successors, that all along they were determined to have a well-educated ministry, and that a Theological Hall grew up alongside of their Church, to train and test every young man aspiring to exercise her sacred functions.

Other Separatists—those, for example, from the

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Church of England—did not for long earn that distinction. Down to a comparatively recent time, the English Nonconformists held low and lax ideas about the intellectual and scholarly qualifications of their ministers, and they took very inadequate measures for the instruction and training of young men who offered themselves for the office. The exclusion of Dissenters from Oxford and Cambridge Universities was, indeed, a great privation ; but it ought to have operated in more strongly stimulating the Nonconformist churches to organize and equip such institutions for themselves as should secure a well-educated ministry.

The 'Fathers' of English Nonconformity were worthy to have sprung immediately from the 'College of the Apostles,' and from under the training and inspiring hands of St. Paul and St. Peter, who never had occasion to be proud of nobler sons or better pupils. Compared with them, the so-called 'Primitive Fathers' (unless, by way of outrageous anachronism, we give these Fathers the benefit of Augustine) would form a feeble and rather poorly-endowed band. Howe, Owen, Baxter, and Bunyan were, clearly and beyond challenge, 'Princes in Israel,' choice representatives of a learned ministry, pre-eminent theologians in the view and for the benefit of the Church Catholic ;

grand preachers, whose eloquence the nation will not 'willingly let die;' heroic men, who had the martyr-spirit that would have confronted, endured, and triumphed over a more appalling martyr-fate than awaited any of them! They lived towards the close of a period which had produced the most capacious, gloriously gifted, and nobly exercised English minds that have ever been known; a period which, by adding Milton to Shakespeare, made English poetry unrivalled in universal literature; and by adding Owen, Howe, and Baxter to Hooker, Jeremy Taylor, and Barrow, made English theology and pulpit eloquence a transcendently rich treasury of thoughts about God and His relations to the human race. The majority of those famous English Puritans had their great faculties developed and trained by the University culture which was cruelly denied to so many generations of their descendants.

From these descendants, Oxford and Cambridge locked up their stores of learning and science, and all the civilizing influences which these evoked; still, could not the Dissenters have found, outside of the two privileged localities, many sources of widely-collected and freshly-effluent wisdom, all seeking to pour themselves into the soul of each earnest student, like the magnificent sun during

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every moment of its course, shedding all its light into the eyes of each man? Wisdom has *tents and tabernacles* as well as *temples*; even 'in the streets' her most precious oracles often sound forth. English Dissenters, in the 18th century, might have found, outside the gates of the two national seats of learning, means and measures for securing an educated ministry. Bunyan's immortal *Pilgrim* did not issue from the cloisters of Oxford or Cambridge; he owed more to a provincial jail, which the despotism of the Stuarts had provided as a theological hall for the training of the Baptist pastor of Bedford; while the 'entrance examination' for that seminary had been conducted by Justices Keeling, Blundale, Beecher, and Snagg, each of whom was worthy to have been associated with the notorious Judge Jeffries, the 'examiner' of the ministerial qualifications of Richard Baxter!

Throughout the 18th century, English Dissent was taught and trained within very humble institutions; yet thence, every now and then, emerged some remarkable youth, the development of whose intellect—as it was neither repressed nor marred by the rude and scanty tuition which he enjoyed, so it might have been but slightly assisted by a large staff of pre-eminently accomplished professors.

The Baptist Academy at Bristol was poorly manned and equipped: yet from it went forth JOHN FOSTER, a man who was destined—more, perhaps, than any of his contemporaries—to enrich and influence the Christian intellects of his age, and to give inspiring and stimulating ideas to the instructors of their fellow-men. He was grandly and variously endowed, but lacked that gift which is often a substitute for all the higher gifts; he lacked a strong and clear voice, and in the pulpit his elocution destroyed all that was animated, energetic, and beautiful in his discourses. The Bristol Academy would not have liked to be credited with Foster's 'inanimate delivery;' and it would be equally unjust to ascribe to the academy the peculiarities of his genius, his original thinking, and his faculty of forcible, subtle, and richly-tinted expression. If Bristol tutors had little to do with his chapel-emptying oratory, they had still less to do with his noble literature, which has fascinated all the best classes of readers, and received their admiring study. When the brilliant essayist appeared, the Bristol Academy and good Dr. Fawcett could recognise no mark that he had been their pupil!

The Seceders had all along a free access to the Scottish Universities, for a classical, scientific, and

philosophical education; hence, in the Divinity Hall of the Secession, professors and students concentrated their energies upon theology. The design of the institution was to prepare young men for the ministry; and as the principal function of this office is the preaching of the gospel, the constant and absorbing aim was to develop, strengthen, and direct the preaching power of the students. Until this power had received the full course of hall tuition and training, no admission to the pulpit was allowed. From the very beginning, though pressed by the entreaties of congregations, Seceders would not have Secession preaching injured by the attempts of novices. They would not have tolerated the juvenile William Jay — even with his wittily chosen text: ‘There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?’ — for they could not have presumed on the repetition of a miracle to multiply the scanty stock, or to give to the untaught, though precocious ‘lad,’ the advantages of learning and experience.

The determination that had been formed by the first Seceders in favour of an educated ministry, was rigorously maintained by all their successors, whose steady aim it was to have the pure gospel persuasively, with all the energies of

‘head, soul, heart, and strength,’ preached over the country, in rural districts and to small congregations, as well as in cities and to overflowing audiences. Other churches seem to have placed their ‘burning and shining lights’ in Edinburgh or Glasgow, and these contrasted with the twinkling tapers which, in provinces and parishes, only made ‘the darkness visible,’—whereas the lights of the Secession were impartially distributed over the country. Not a few of her best preachers lived and laboured to the close of life within humble rural spheres, delivering each week to small and simple flocks such expositions of Christian truth and duty as their city brethren might have envied.

Of the various causes which concurred to give a rapid progress and permanent success to the Secession, during its history of more than 140 years, ITS PREACHING—distinguished alike for evangelical purity and for intellectual grasp and force—deserves a prominent mention. The *average ability* of that preaching has been a high level, higher than in other churches, though it may often have been without the *commanding individual eminences* which these churches could show in Edinburgh or Glasgow. The accuracy of this general comparison, and the immediate connection between Secession preaching and the tuition of

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the Divinity Hall, will come under a more searching examination in a subsequent chapter.

The Secession Divinity Hall has invariably done its work so well, that all improvements upon it were long suspiciously regarded, cautiously discussed, and then slowly adopted. It kept for nearly eighty years to the *single professorship* with which it started, though the importance, if not the necessity, of additional professors had long been acknowledged, and though the Church had continued to enjoy such a settled prosperity as would have rendered the payment of a large theological faculty a very trivial burden. The main obstruction was not in avarice, nor in any imaginary alarm about the cost ; but it lay in the widely-cherished idea, that a long succession of students had been admirably taught and trained by a single professor, and that those students had everywhere proved themselves to be most efficient ministers. Where, then, it was asked in all quarters by the Seceding clergy and laity, is the call, or at least the need, for a reinforcement of teaching power ? Was not John Brown of Haddington, or George Lawson of Selkirk, in himself a grand theological faculty, that required neither a division nor a multiplication of tutorial toil ?

Besides, by far the largest and most important part of theological teaching and training must



always be performed by each individual student ; the pupil, indeed, doing everything of the culture except the smallest possible fraction. When a proposal to increase the number of theological professors was before the United Secession Synod, a general and deep impression was produced in its favour by the unexpected use of a homely illustration. 'It takes,' said Mr. Jamieson of Methven, 'ten or a dozen men to *make a pin* ; and on the pin's-head a concentration or division of manufacturing skill is engaged ; whereas a single professor suffices to make one of your ministers !' It was, as we have elsewhere represented, an utterly inapplicable and misleading *simile*, since the pin was quite passive and helpless in its own formation, and had not even a head to begin with, whereas the student must always be the most valuable 'factor' in the process of his own education ; and the fact that he has a head is more than equivalent to the largest faculty of *professors*, who could not have furnished him with brains—or even with ears. The pin simile moved the Synod to adopt the suggested number of professors, though, had it been applied to the number of pastors for a congregation, the Synod would have paused, as new light broke in upon the grotesque conclusions which the universally applauded simile would warrant.

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Other improvements, too, upon the original and hitherto strictly conserved constitution of the Divinity Hall, had been long regarded with passive approval; and we are now only on the eve of their adoption.

The new hall will open in November, then to have what its predecessors lacked throughout all the 140 years of its existence—a duly extended annual session of five months, and five winter months in Edinburgh passed alongside of the open University; and then, also, to have a staff of six professors—a much larger and more complete theological faculty than it has hitherto known. Of this faculty three are long-tried and thoroughly-proved professors;<sup>1</sup> and the other three were selected by the Synod in May from among the more than six hundred clergymen belonging to the denomination.

It is a singular and significant fact, that of the four ministers who originally formed the Secession, and have since, with affectionate reverence, been called ‘the Four Fathers,’ each was subsequently,

<sup>1</sup> The sudden death of one of these—Dr. Eadie—unrivalled for his Biblical learning, has taken place as this sheet was going to press. Deep and universal is the grief that the new Hall will for ever lack the presence and labours of this remarkable scholar and most manly and genial teacher; and that grief would pass into despondency, if it were necessary that his successor should be his equal. Dr. Eadie’s death is an irreparable loss to the opening session.

at different periods, chosen to be the theological professor ; nor did a doubt ever arise as to the admirable way in which he performed his duties. The fact attests the endowments and learning of the four founders of the Secession. We cannot suppose that all the ministers of the same Church, at present more than six hundred in number, individually have eminent qualifications for a professorship ; still the finding of only three men who possess adequate gifts and attainments for the vacant departments will suffice. If all the six hundred ministers were competent to become professors, then the selection of three men for the Divinity Hall posts would have involved the exercise of superhuman magnanimity, not less than of superhuman discrimination. Yet if, like Israel,—which in the time of the idolatrous Ahab had seven thousand faithful worshippers of God living in such a close retreat and concealment that they were wholly unknown to the sympathetic zeal and the prophetic insight of Elijah, whose courage was sinking under the belief that he was the sole-surviving champion of the true religion,—our Church did possess, in her clergy, the identical ratio of professorial competency which belonged to the infant Church of Erskine, Moncrieff, Wilson, and Fisher ; and if, moreover, that competency was of the very

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highest order, there would, in the peculiar circumstances of the age, be scope and exercise for it. Though it were enlarged and heightened, until it rose above an ideal perfection, it could not do more than simply meet the present crisis, when every pulpit should have—in addition to its own eloquence—the intellectual power and culture proper to a Theological Chair.

Boasting is not less unseemly in churches than in individuals; but we believe that the Church of the Erskines and Gillespie, which in the past has done much for the evangelization and well-being of Scotland, will not in the future be less distinguished for her labours, the efficiency of which she secures by her amended Divinity Hall.

But here, in 1876, when the Divinity Hall, endowed with new resources (by the increase of professors, by their release from ministerial office and function, and their undistracted employment in academical work; by the introduction of two new departments of study—*Hebrew*, and *Church History*; and by the extension of the annual session from two to five months), is about to start on its new career, we turn away from contemplating its heavier responsibilities, its aggravated difficulties, and its reinforcement of hopes and encouragements. We

refrain both from considering its new equipment, and from speculating on the manner in which it may acquit itself in the future, and on its probable achievements. We turn from the present and the future, to attend to the past of the Divinity Hall, though not in the anticipation that the 'old' will be 'better than the new.' The design of our little volume is purely commemorative, and to deal with the 140 years of the Hall's past existence. We seek to exhibit the figures and features—shadowy and faint though they must be—of the worthies who successively filled the chair of instruction. We seek to recall the twenty-one professors to their individual spheres—their 'local habitations and names.' We wish that these and their leading associations we could reproduce with the vividness with which they were impressed on the minds of pupils; those once 'living epistles' that have long been obliterated in the dust! What Wilson was to his students at Perth, Moncrieff at Abernethy, Ebenezer Erskine at Stirling, Fisher at Glasgow, Swanson at Kinross, Brown at Haddington, Lawson at Selkirk, and Bruce at Whitburn, had been pictured in clear outlines and fresh colours that never faded from memory, until memory itself passed away with the many hundreds of students who, to the last, fondly cherished its Hall-images. What subsequent

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professors were to their students—Drs. Dick, Mitchell, Thomson, Brown, Balmer, Duncan, Lindsay, and M'Michael, at Edinburgh and Glasgow—is deeply traced upon the youthful recollections of many a pupil who still remains in the exercise of that ministry for which some of those revered men prepared him.

'Remember them that have had the rule over you,' is a sacred injunction which students can obey in reference to their professors cheerfully, and with the experience that the 'commandment is not grievous.' It is, indeed, possible to take a pleasant retrospect of what, when it was being lived through, occasioned keen misery, and needed no ordinary patience. A man's reminiscences of his schoolmaster are generally pleasant, and steeped in the glad sunshine of early days, even though that schoolmaster had been cruelly severe, and though the pupil had in his school life found obedience to be so irksome and painful, that it was only more endurable than disobedience. The boy had groaned under the yoke and the lash of a tyrant; yet, when the boy becomes a man, the tyrant has been transformed into a gracious ruler who is pleasantly remembered. But of professors whom students during the Hall-terms regarded with affectionate

veneration, and from whom they received no harshness, but encouragement, stimulus, and help, the recollections give delight rare and pure.

The memory of the twenty-one professors whose character and Hall-work this volume attempts to exhibit, has been carried into all districts of Scotland and into many far-off lands by ministers who had been their pupils. Of each and all of those twenty-one, the author wishes that he could have had the personal remembrance—vivified by varied and interesting associations—which he cherishes of *the four* whose tuition he was privileged to enjoy. Of these the image in his mind is not less distinct, fresh, and animated, than when it was originally impressed — as he sat in the classroom listening to their words and looking on their faces. That image then, as ever since, drew forth an admiration that had nothing of ‘hero-worship,’ which magnifies and exalts a favourite professor’s merits, until these are not only beyond their own limits and above their own defects, but beyond the limits and above the defects that have been found in far greater men.

Students are prone to one of two extremes. Either they rush into extravagant laudation of a professor, or they keep in the rear, acting as depreciators or affecting to be contemptuous critics of

his peculiar qualities. They 'raise a mortal to the skies,' or they 'bring an angel down.' As they advance beyond the student stage, their fanatical admiration cools and clarifies; but we have not heard, nor do we know, of any change that passes over those who in youth are contemptuous critics and sneering detractors. The scorers in the Divinity Hall are likely, we fear, to continue through life to be cynical, if not malignant, towards all intellectual excellence that transcends their own, and, from shame about the 'one' small 'talent' which they have wrapped up and buried (for that which they do use and circulate is no 'talent' at all), bitterly hostile to every possessor of the 'five' or the 'ten' talents that have been both brightened and multiplied by being conscientiously 'put out to usury.'

The 'golden mean' between those two extremes of extravagant admiration and of mean depreciation may be reached even in the season of *youth*; but not by any process of mere *calculation*. Why, in youth, should not the *inner eye* see the greatness and beauty of intellect and of its productions, just as truly and with as little exaggeration as the *outer eye* sees the stature and symmetry of any physical structure? Why, in youth, should the body's eye far surpass the mind's eye in its faculty of genuine and just perception?



Besides, let a young student have been long and fully acquainted with, and duly impressed by, the men and the works of highest genius and most commanding intellect in the grand and rich department of literature, it was not likely that, when he entered upon his Divinity Hall course, he—however susceptible and impassioned his nature—would be irresistibly inspired by a fanatical admiration of the theological professors at whose feet he was to sit. Dazzled by the splendours and thrilled by the melodies of poetry and philosophy, he came to the Divinity Hall, where, when he found the saving ‘wisdom’ which had been ‘foolishness’ to the sages of antiquity, expounded in solemn yet unadorned style, he could be in no great danger of overrating the natural and acquired qualifications of his new instructors. Their merits were solid, and without any false glitter; and in one and all of the professors—both in what they were and in what they did—there was a settled *sobriety* which must have tended to the production, in a student’s mind, of a just estimate, and to the toning down of an extravagant admiration. The sobriety which pervaded the nature and character, the life and labours of Dr. Lawson of Selkirk, was scarcely less conspicuous in the admiring views and sentiments with which he was invariably regarded by all his

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pupils. Their praises of him were universal and enthusiastic, yet free from the slightest exaggeration; and his students never, to the day of their death, modified or lessened them. The author of this 'memorial' of the professors feels assured that the admiration which it embodies is, in kind and measure, richly merited. If, over the course of 140 years, it could have been entirely formed out of the fresh impressions upon the minds of students, and thus drawn from their earliest admiration, he would have been better satisfied; for this would have been equivalent to the reminiscences of a single pupil who had been somehow privileged to sit for nearly a century and a half at the feet of one and all of the twenty-one professors! Readers will excuse us for having failed either to meet with that 'single pupil' (who could only have been the *Wandering Jew*), or to discover those 'fresh impressions on the minds of students,' even in the invaluable volume of the late Dr. M'Kelvie's *Annals and Statistics*.

A prominent characteristic of the Divinity Hall was the harmony of doctrine, and the unity of evangelical spirit and aim, which the twenty-one professors kept up through 140 years. If they had met together, and in mutual consultation arranged how all their teaching should agree with itself and

with the divine canon ; nay, if all that teaching had been matured in a single brain and uttered by one voice, they could not have shown a finer consistency. Other divinity halls have, during the same long period, been visited with 'every wind of doctrine,' and their many professors have championed as many systems, several of which violently clashed with each other. In the latter case, diversity, discrepancy, and contradiction attest neither the independence of thought in the theologians nor the progress of theology ; and in the former case, the harmony of their views of gospel truth does not indicate that the professors were a servile flock rushing blindly wherever the first of their number led the way, or that they were all the slaves of a creed. The Hall had for long a tent-like existence, shifting from Perth to Abernethy, Stirling, Kinross, Whitburn, Haddington, and Selkirk, until it 'rose into its rest' in Edinburgh ; but it always displayed the same 'banner of truth.' The places of its sojourn were among the most romantic and beautiful in Scotland, and students became familiar with the scenery during the delightful months of August and September ; hence Hall reminiscences formed a texture in which 'doctrine incorrupt,' venerable professors, and pleasant landscapes were interwoven.

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## CHAPTER II.

1737-1747.

The Secession and its 'Four Fathers'—The new Divinity Hall, as taught by the Rev. William Wilson, the first Professor, and by the Rev. Alexander Moncrieff, the second Professor, at Perth and Abernethy—The Professors and their Students.

THE origin of the Secession of 1733 from the Church of Scotland has been so often told, that it would be unpardonable here to rewrite its history, however briefly. Without tracing it back to causes which had begun to operate within the Revolution Church, and had received augmented force from the circumstances through which the path of the Church lay, we merely indicate the occasion.

It sprung directly from the unconstitutional and despotic conduct of 'the prevailing party' in the Church, at a time, too, when there was a sure prospect that this party would rapidly increase until its already overwhelming majority absorbed nearly the whole Church, and that its conduct would become more grievously tyrannical. The Church Courts had not only permitted the serious doc-

trinal errors of a divinity professor to pass unpunished—almost uncensured; they had not only equipped with new and gratuitous means of oppression the system of lay-patronage that had been restored by Queen Anne; but they had begun haughtily, and with a high hand, to crush and silence the feeble yet faithful minority of ministers who ‘testified against’ such violations of the Church’s creed and constitution. The General Assembly, in 1730 and in 1732, showed itself determined to put an end to the small though steady resistance that was offered by a few earnest ministers; and to suppress all their remonstrances, protests, and dissents. Not only should these be unavailing, but they should not be allowed to leave a trace of themselves in the minute-book. Not only should evil be triumphant; but opponents, censurers, and critics, however few, must not dwell in its presence! nor must the voice of dissent or protest—even in humblest whisper—be raised! To such a height was intolerance carried by the ‘prevailing party,’ that they interdicted the expedient to which alone the few dissatisfied and aggrieved brethren could resort for the sake of keeping a good conscience,—that of ‘protesting’ against the encroachments which they were helpless either to arrest or to abate.

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The vindication, then, of the Secession of 1733 must not be held to rest upon the mere existence of great and growing evils within the Church of Scotland (though even on this ground, when narrowed so as to include only one of those evils,—that of *patronage*,—the Erskine movement is amply justified by the far larger Secession of 1843, and by the recent abolition of lay-patronage within the Establishment); but the true statement and defence of the case of the first Seceders is, that through the persistent tyranny of the Church Courts they were made responsible for evils which they utterly abhorred, through being denied all the means of relief which their conscience needed, and which the constitution of the Church had provided. For meekly appealing for that relief, they were summarily suspended from office, and thrust out from the ministry and communion of the Church. Their only offence—ostensible as well as real—was their tender fidelity to the Church's creed, constitution, and government. Driven to be witnesses outside her pale, they resolved to make that hasty and violent expulsion a deliberate secession from 'the prevailing party in her judicatures.'

Ebenezer Erskine, when stepping into the pulpit at Perth, in October 1732, to preach as moderator at the opening of the Synod of Perth

and Stirling, little thought that he would then be honoured to sound the signal for that movement. Towards the close of his sermon, he commented upon the Assembly's procedure in aggravating the yoke of patronage; and though he spoke the truth with manly boldness, it was without either exaggeration or bitterness, and 'more in sorrow than in anger.' It deeply offended the majority of the members of Synod; and though a moderator's sermon never before or since was made the subject of keen and prolonged discussion, they proceeded to handle it as the chief business of the court for three days. They indignantly denounced both 'the matter and the manner' of Mr. Erskine's discourse, and resolved that he should be rebuked at the bar of the Synod. This sentence, on his appeal to the Supreme Court, was confirmed; and the General Assembly, to prove that it would 'stamp out' faithful freedom of speech against its own wrongdoing, decreed that he should receive another rebuke then and there. The terms of his protest, in which he was joined by three sympathizing brethren, Alexander Moncrieff of Abernethy, William Wilson of Perth, and James Fisher of Kinclaven, led to him and these brethren being handed over to the Assembly's Commission for

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discipline. The issue was, that the four, for adhering to that protest, were suspended from the office of the ministry; and three months afterwards, on their continued impenitence, they were ejected from their pastoral charges.

Mr. Erskine, however, and his associates, when protesting against those sentences of censure, suspension, and expulsion, declared that, in spite of them, they would still exercise their ministerial functions, and maintain their relations to their congregations. They at the same time deliberately announced that they made 'a *Secession* from the prevailing party in the judicatures' of the Church.

That this *Secession* was not a mere carrying out of the common device for a *dismissed party* to pretend to *take a voluntary leave*, is apparent from the fact that subsequently, when the Church Courts were in a conciliatory mood, and offered to restore the four ministers to their places in the Church without any humiliation, these brethren declined to go back, as they had no reasonable hope that the evils within the Establishment would be abated, or that the tyranny over tender consciences would be relaxed, and the constitutional means of relief by protests and dissents be again available. Thus the step was really a *Secession*, though it was preceded by an expulsion



for which the Church Courts were permanently responsible. On what broad grounds of vindication, too, that Secession rests—compared with those on which the most ingenious apologist would attempt to justify the ‘breach’ which soon took place within the Secession itself, through the paltry dispute about the ‘Burgess oath’!

In less than a month after the Commission had driven them out—in the beginning of December 1733—Mr. Erskine and his three brethren met at Gairney Bridge, near Kinross; and there, after solemn and prolonged deliberation, they formed themselves into the ‘Associate Presbytery.’

Though thus organized, and meeting frequently, they delayed to enter upon any ‘acts of jurisdiction,’ for they cherished the strongest desire that there might soon be such indications of a reforming spirit within the national Church as should warrant them to seek a re-union; and they were determined to refrain from doing anything that might be an obstacle in the way of this consummation. Not until August 1735, when it had become clear that the Secession must continue, did they—after full deliberation—agree to ‘proceed to *acts of jurisdiction*’ with the view of equipping the Church of the Secession as not a temporary, but a permanent institution; and one, too, that was needed—not

merely for a relief to the consciences of four ministers, but on account of the ecclesiastical grievances, the spiritual wants, and the eager desires of many of their countrymen in various districts.

We pass over the labours which the 'Associate Presbytery' at the first stage of its history undertook; but it is both interesting and strictly relevant to the subject of our present volume, to notice a very strange proceeding, engaged in as soon as that Presbytery had resolved on jurisdiction. The members, the four brethren, at a special meeting came forward in the character of penitents, 'confessing one to another' a particular 'sin,' and each in turn receiving a due rebuke, and a suitable admonition. There is a grotesqueness in the sudden transformation which each undergoes, when the confession-making penitent becomes an authoritative judge and reprover of his fellow-sinners. The proceeding on the part of those faithful and eminently practical men, and at a grave crisis of their Seceding career, was unquestionably sincere; yet it wears such a superfluous aspect, that any simple narrative of it might be taken for a sneering caricature.

What was the 'sin' which called for this semi-public discipline? Had the 'Four Fathers,' when at the bar of the Synod, and at the bar of the

General Assembly, yielded to fear and shame, or had they felt angry resentment, or any unworthy pride? Had there then, in their trying situation, been any loss either of courage or of meekness? Had they shown either cowardice or irritability? Was it the memory of 'faults' like these that stung them into confession? No; Ebenezer Erskine and his three associates, in all the appearances which they, as protesters against and sufferers from the intolerance of the Established Church Courts, had made, were distinguished by a modesty and meekness, as well as an undauntedness of demeanour; and they looked back upon the scenes of trial in 1733 with a deep satisfaction which, when passing into the sympathies of their numerous followers in after generations, has become intense admiration! They had not to acknowledge anything unheroic throughout the Secession crisis.

The 'sin' which they confessed was of older date, and had been upon their consciences since 1729, when Professor Simson, charged with unsound doctrine, stood before the General Assembly. The four now condemned themselves for having failed to resist with all possible emphasis and pertinacity the leniency of the Assembly towards the heretic who was training

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his students to regard Jesus Christ as a mere man, and to preach *Christ crucified* as nothing but a martyrdom for the sake of human truth and virtue! 'Sinful silence' was the accusation with which they afflicted themselves. Ebenezer Erskine had protested against the Assembly's inadequate sentence upon Simson, but he blamed himself for not doing more; and Alexander Moncrieff was deeply contrite for not having protested. Fisher and Wilson had not been members of the Assembly in the year of Simson's trial; but as the former had been present in the Court during the professor's case, he held himself accountable and censurable, though the Assembly would have interdicted and resented any interference on his part as irregular and illegal. Mr. Wilson had not even been present, yet he took a full share of the confessions that were going around the 'Associate Presbytery.' His three brethren, however, recognised such peculiarities in his position as fairly exempted him from sharing in the rebukes and admonitions which they were administering to one another. His solitary escape from discipline in the question about Professor Simson may be held to have been a proper, though it was an unintentional, honour to the man who was about to fill the post of first professor in the Secession Divinity Hall!

The proceedings of that 'special meeting' of the Associate Presbytery, though not characterized by the sagacity and sturdy common sense which shaped the conduct of the Secession Fathers to the realities of their position, were significant in one aspect, and it is for this that we have introduced them—they showed what importance those fathers attached to *the office of a divinity professor*. They regarded it as designed, not merely for stimulating and training the minds of students, but for furnishing these with a fully developed and skilfully defended system of pure evangelical doctrine. They felt that a heretical professor was more extensively mischievous than a heretical preacher. The former poisoned the springs and the wells of living water; the latter poisoned only a certain number of pitchers. The congregation that is cursed with a preacher of unsound doctrine may consist of not a few who are too juvenile and thoughtless to be injured by it, and of many who are too far advanced in years and too strongly confirmed in their views to admit the perilous novelties, while among the remaining hearers there may be an obtuseness which makes them proof against harm. A heretical pastorate, though extending over more than one generation, seems often to have left the flock uninfected. A

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divinity professor, however, has, in his students, young men who, intellectually and spiritually, are peculiarly susceptible to permanent influence and injury from his unsound doctrine ; and they afterwards become centres of propagation for what they have so quickly received. The Secession Fathers dreaded Professors Simson and Campbell far more than a host of anti-evangelical clergymen.

From various towns and districts, where sympathy with the Seceding cause had been strongly felt, and where suffering from the violent intrusion of ministers was fresh and wide-spread, came applications to the Associate Presbytery for a supply of preaching. In whatever part of the country any one of the four brethren preached, though on a week-day, an immense multitude was attracted from a broad area ; but such occasional services were utterly insufficient for the demand.

At a Presbytery meeting in November 1736, various petitions from societies and groups of families were discussed ; and it was proposed that one of the brethren should be appointed to teach and train young men for the ministry. Messrs. Erskine and Moncrieff were entrusted, as a committee, with the preparation of a report on this subject. On the next day this report was laid before the Presbytery, and it recommended that, in

view of 'the desolate condition of many parishes in Scotland, through the violent intrusions that have been made upon them,' and in answer to 'the frequent and repeated applications to this Presbytery from several quarters of the land for sending forth labourers into the Lord's vineyard, that so they might have the benefit of the gospel and the ordinances thereof,' the Presbytery should 'nominate and appoint one of their number to take the inspection of the youth that should offer themselves to be trained up for the holy ministry; and that also every one of the brethren should carefully look out for faithful men, to whom the ministry should be committed.'

On the question being raised as to whether a decision should be made at once, or postponed until the next meeting of Presbytery, it was resolved to proceed immediately, both in adopting the recommendation and in electing a professor.

One professor was then judged to be sufficient. In the scheme of the Established Church for theological training, there had been, and then were, three professorships—one for Hebrew, another for Church history, and the third and cardinal one for theology proper (there not being for long afterwards a department of Biblical criticism and exegesis).

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The first two, as conducted, had invariably been of small benefit to students, who were seldom enabled to go beyond either the mere alphabet of the Hebrew language, or, in ecclesiastical history, further back than the era of Luther's Reformation. It was presumed by the Associate Presbytery, that the brother whom they were about to choose as professor, and whose main function would be to exhibit the system of Christian truth and its harmonious and authentic character, might also overtake the communication of more than the average knowledge of Hebrew and of Church history given to Established Church students.

A single professor could, a hundred and forty years ago, effectively superintend more departments of learning than would be possible for him in our day. In that former era, his time and attention were far less engrossed by reading ; for how few were the valuable books on all subjects of knowledge and discussion, compared with the immense library that now invites his examination, and the many standard books that demand his intense study ! How easily and quickly could a scholarly man, in 1737, make himself master of the literature that had been produced within any sphere of inquiry ; whereas now the accumulation of able and learned works wholly defies a similar conquest by the most



comprehensive mind ! Thus, in the last century, a single professor would find it easier to give an efficient training in Hebrew and Church history, as well as in theology, than for a professor in our day to be a competent teacher of theology alone.

Besides, formerly, students were ready to allow their professor all the time he chose to take for communicating instruction ; and instead of daily rushing from the class-room whenever their one 'little hour' begins to strike, and before he can finish the sentence which is upon his lips, they sat patiently, if not gratefully, for two or three hours, until he had carefully got through his lessons in Hebrew and Church history, and his lectures and examinations on theology. Class-rooms, like churches, might have clocks on the outside to keep students punctual to the time of entering ; but they had no clocks in the inside to make them anxious and impatient about the time of leaving.

On proceeding to name the brother who should be professor, all in the Associate Presbytery—except the individual himself—entertained a unanimous view and wish. All fixed upon Mr. Wilson as eminently qualified, except Mr. Wilson himself, whose modesty led him to regard any of his three brethren as possessed of far higher claims to a preference. But the unanimity of their choice,

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and the earnestness with which they pressed it, moved him to accept the appointment, which also placed him in a sphere of new labour that was peculiarly congenial. He was, indeed, the right man for the Theological Chair; and in the long line of his successors, the most distinguished professor will never need to blush in shame for the powers, acquirements, and success of the first occupant of that chair!

Mr. Wilson's intellect was not only vigorous and versatile, but of a high order; and it had been fully and harmoniously developed by University culture, and by the private studies which he had subsequently carried on with unflagging energy and enthusiasm. He had so trained himself, that his will had entire and unceasing command over itself, and over all his powers and habits. Hence his application to severe and continuous mental toil had become easy to himself, though it seemed remarkable to others; and in all the tasks to which he was called, either by the wish of brethren and friends, or by his own conscience and inclination, he persevered hour after hour, as well as day after day, with the regular and unremitting energy with which men carry on a mechanical occupation, and the industry of his brain was equal to that of their hands. He had naturally a powerful, finely-

tempered, and elastic physical constitution, and this, when wholly under command, gives strong impulses to intellectual labour, and influences its quality not less than its quantity ; yet somehow, as in Mr. Wilson's case, the strongly-built frame that enshrines an intensely studious mind, is more early shattered and overthrown than the weak or sickly body of other intellectual labourers. Among the new professor's brethren his power of application was proverbial, and with all his modesty, he could jest about it in his own grave manner. In his application of the prophet's vision of four character-faces to the 'Four Fathers of the Secession,' he appropriated to himself that of '*the ox*,' which represented his steadiness and patience under the yoke of that toil assigned to him by his brethren, though it failed, as a literal likeness of his own face would not have failed, to show the natural dignity of his demeanour.

At the next meeting of the Associate Presbytery, Mr. Wilson announced that he would begin his course of instruction in the first week of March, and continue it for three months, and that this would be the length and the season of his annual session. The individual members of the Presbytery forthwith intimated the opening of the Divinity Hall in the spring of 1737, to all those districts that had

corresponded, or were known to sympathize, with them ; and added that they would receive into the new seminary all students duly recommended.

Mr. Wilson had, in the interval between the first week of November 1736 and the first week of March 1737, but a brief space to prepare for the discharge of his new functions ; and even that space was largely occupied by ministerial and other labours which he would not neglect,—for, in addition to the visiting and catechizing of his people, he preached four times each week, and he was entrusted by his brethren with the composition of the elaborate *Testimonies* and *Defences* which appeared on behalf of the young denomination. There was, indeed, in those occupations, nothing incongruous or conflicting with the duties of his professorship, and the mental excitement from his pulpit and from his desk would give an impulse to the work of his theological chair ; but, though they put him into the best frame of mind, they monopolized his time, and left little or no leisure for his professorial studies. Mr. Wilson, however, set himself—as we shall soon see—to grapple with and master the most serious difficulties of the professorship. He did not fall back upon his stock of pulpit discourses, and attempt from these to select what might be patched up into decent prelections

for the chair. He undertook a heavier task than to convert sermons into academical lectures by merely substituting 'Gentlemen,' or 'My young friends,' for 'Beloved brethren,' and by blotting out the frequent particles of interjection that had made the composition effectively declamatory or pathetic in the pulpit, but not soberly didactic. He resolved to employ the Latin language alone when instructing and examining his students,—a circumstance which, while it warrants far more important conclusions, is a proof that his Perth flock had not already received what was to be offered to the students.

The professor's place of residence was the seat of the Secession Divinity Hall; and Perth and its neighbourhood surrounded the study of theology with exquisitely beautiful scenery and deeply interesting historical associations. The new Hall was completely bare of academical memories; it was unhaunted by the echo of a single syllable of wisdom from any theological faculty. But, instead of the spell from any academical '*genius loci*,' there were natural, ever-living, and ever-fresh charms; and these stole into meditative minds with subtle influence. Around Perth, too, there were not merely civil, but ecclesiastical associations. John Knox had been there in his might; and if his iconoclastic eloquence could be traced in architec-

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tural ruins that were far more legible than any printed words, yet his grateful countrymen should ever remember that what he directly and with clear and earnest design *restored*—a free and a spiritual Church for the whole nation—was infinitely more valuable than what he indirectly and unintentionally (through the frenzied mob misinterpreting his words) was the means of *destroying*—a mere pile of stones that had been the stronghold of superstition and tyranny. Perth had also, for students of the new Divinity Hall, special associations that were too recent to be memories. Four years and a half ago, the Church, of which they aspired to be ministers, sprung into existence from a faithful sermon preached in Perth at the opening of the provincial Synod, by the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine; and they were privileged to have, as their professor, one of the 'Four Fathers' of the Secession! Perth was no dull or uninteresting locality for a Theological Hall. The spring season, in which it opened, harmonized with the energies and hopes of the young Church, and with the fresh and sanguine nature of the young men who came together to be prepared as its future ministers. There had also been, in the previous month (February), an occurrence that agreed well with the auspicious season. Mr. Ralph Erskine, minister of

Dunfermline, and Mr. Thomas Mair, minister of Orwell, took a step in advance of the position which they had hitherto occupied ; and from merely sympathizing with the four 'Fathers of the Secession,' they proceeded to cast in their lot with them, 'for better, for worse,' and to be identified with them in ecclesiastical communion, character, and fortune. The two formed a valuable accession, for they were men singularly upright and conscientious, as well as marked by talents and accomplishments. Ralph Erskine possessed even a fine poetic *genius*, though it had an imperfect and perverse culture and exercise, and worked through a medium of such phraseology and illustration as would have brought down the sublimest and most beautiful conceptions to a low level and mean surroundings. He was the first poet of the Secession Church, with genius inferior to that of Michael Bruce, yet nearly equal to that of Robert Pollok ; and it is no small glory of the three that their poetry has been appreciated, not merely by their own Church, but by all the sections of Scottish Christianity. Ralph Erskine's *Gospel Sonnets* show both genuine poetry and pure evangelism, degraded in lines that had much of the doggerel character, though often they had phrases in which the felicity of genius, working upon poetry and upon Christian truth, was consummate. He was

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+ generally called the 'Gold-spink (goldfinch) of the gospel;' but from the Scottish Ralph Erskine to the American Ira Sankey, there has been an accumulation of proofs that the 'singing of the gospel' can never take the place of the 'preaching of the gospel,' though the former may be subsidiary and ornamental to the latter.

The students who entered the Hall as soon as it was opened (in the first week of March, 1737) were *six* in number, answering, by a strange coincidence, to the four Fathers, *plus* the last two February accessions, that now formed the clerical members of the 'Associate Presbytery.' The class of students under Mr. Wilson was rather small, perhaps, to allow scope and to furnish stimulus for keen competition; but theological training may dispense with what is of doubtful propriety and value even in secular education.

This small class of six was without its usual proportion of intellectually and morally weak brethren; as if the peculiar circumstances of the young Secession Church had acted as a *severe test* in keeping back those young men who subsequently would have been feeble or otherwise unworthy ministers of that Church. All the six were students of excellent promise, which was afterwards redeemed by performance.



It was, indeed, remarkable, that all the six should stand on a high level of merit ; but of the six there were two who occupied superior heights. The mention of the names of John Hunter and Adam Gib will at once be attended by the denominational renown which they have enjoyed for nearly a century and a half. The latter, endowed with a masculine vigour of intellect and a forcible utterance both by tongue and by pen, was destined to a ministerial career in Edinburgh, where he preached the gospel and held up 'a banner' for the Secession, with eminent fidelity and success. A few years before he entered the Divinity Hall at Perth, he had from his place in the 'students' gallery of the General Assembly, witnessed Ebenezer Erskine preserving a firm and calm front in the midst of assault, browbeating, and derision from a pitiless majority in the Court ; and, down to the end of his life, long after a cooler and more correct judgment than could be formed in youth has either effaced or changed the impressions that had been traced by the glowing imagination of a young man, Adam Gib continued to speak of the 'majestic' demeanour exhibited by the leader of the Secession at the bar of the General Assembly.

Only a few years, however, had passed, and Adam Gib was still a very young minister when—

in the controversy and ecclesiastical 'breach' about the 'Burgess oath' breaking out—he *excommunicated* the venerable man, the majesty of whose deportment was indelibly fixed in his mind; and estranged as both continued to be until their spirits met each other in the mutual forgiveness and perfect peace of the heavenly state, Adam Gib delighted in middle life and old age to recall the scene in which Ebenezer Erskine figured with the majesty of true heroism, though this demeanour was no transient or exceptional elevation, called forth by the special occasion, for Mr. Gib declared to a young preacher who mentioned that he had never heard Ebenezer Erskine preach, 'Well, then, sir, you never heard the gospel in its majesty.'

The other distinguished member of Mr. Wilson's class in the first session of the Hall—John Hunter—died in the flower of his richly-promising youth, and in the third month of his ministry. He had attended the Divinity Hall of the Church of Scotland for some sessions; hence a full course of study under Mr. Wilson was not needed, and he was the first licentiate of the Secession. The Associate Presbytery licensed him to preach in June 1738. In a month the Presbytery received a petition from the people of Morebattle, Stichel, and several adjacent parishes, for the moderation

of a call to him. There was entire unanimity on the part both of the people and of the Presbytery ; yet his ordination did not take place until the middle of October, when his professor and Mr. Fisher (two of the 'Secession Fathers'), along with Messrs. Ralph Erskine, Thomas Mair, and James Thomson, attended the ceremony at *Gateshaw Brae*, a romantic spot at the foot of the Cheviots.<sup>1</sup>

What Hunter was, in his brief career of less than three months, during which he had scarcely time to preach once to each of the parishes that were under his pastoral care, was shown by the impassioned lamentations that broke out from all quarters over his early death. The most venerable of his clerical brethren did not hesitate to apply to him the description, 'He was a burning and a shining light.' Ralph Erskine mourned over him in both an English and a Latin elegy. The English tribute was as follows :

'The mighty HUNTER, well employed  
Between the distant poles,  
His mortal body soon destroyed  
To save immortal souls.'

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<sup>1</sup> The *centenary* of this, the first ordination in the Secession Church, was celebrated by the Presbytery of Coldstream and Berwick on 15th October 1837, when a sermon and several addresses were delivered in the open air at Gateshaw Brae, on the same spot where the ordination services had been conducted a hundred years before. On both occasions there was an audience of several thousands.

The first two lines are marked by bold exaggeration, the simple student and preacher being changed into the '*mighty Hunter*,' and the Scottish parishes over which his pastorate stretched being extended into all the immense space that lies 'between the distant poles.' The play upon the name of Hunter is a trifle, though Nimrod's occupation was wont in Scotland to be associated with those ministers who owed their living to a patron, rather than with a Secession pastor who had been chosen and called by the congregation ; but to magnify the district around Stichel and Morebattle into the whole earth's latitude and longitude, is somewhat beyond a poet's licence.

The Latin elegy was in these words :

'Ipse Petrus, quamvis hominum *Piscator* obivit ;  
Horum hic *Venator*, quin properanter, obit.'

Far nobler than either epitaph was the remark of a layman in reply to some neighbour who was interpreting the premature death of Mr. Hunter as a divine judgment against the Secession cause. 'God,' said that neighbour, 'is frowning on your cause, since He has removed, at so early a period, your first licentiate, a man of such eminent talents.'

'No,' was the answer (which deserved the preservation it has received), 'it is not a frown. You know that, under the Jewish dispensation, God

claimed the first-fruits, which secured a good harvest; and I expect that there will be raised up in the Secession Church a good harvest of gospel ministers.'

There was a tribute to the gifts and preaching power of Hunter from another quarter—a quarter whence no words of encouragement for the Secession, or even of tardy acknowledgment that there had been anything great or good, talents, learning, or eloquence, in connection with the Secession, could have been expected. A eulogy of the first licentiate of the Associate Presbytery from PRINCIPAL ROBERTSON was not less surprising than a strain of bewailing raised in Gath or in the 'streets of Askelon' over Jonathan. The Principal, in middle life and old age, was wont to declare that his memory retained, and often reproduced, the thrilling tones of eloquence which he, when a boy, had once heard from Mr. Hunter.

It is true that frequently boys are strongly moved rather by artificial eloquence, or by mere rant when it is energetic, and has—along with its thundering sound—foam and fury; but, in the case of those boys who afterwards attain to a large and liberal intellectual development, any unworthy eloquence that had formerly moved and impressed their susceptible minds, is abandoned, drops out

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from their associations, and ceases either to be operative or even to be remembered. In the case of young Robertson, the preaching of Hunter, if it had not possessed sterling qualities which could stand the examination of riper years, and a more correct and refined judgment than had originally listened to it, would have been gradually dismissed both from memory and from admiration ; and the celebrated Principal would never have acknowledged that, in his early years, the influence of that preaching was irresistible, and still sounded—after a whole generation—within the recesses of his nature.

The other students (four in number) who attended the Divinity Hall in its opening session of 1737 call for no special notice here—except that they were men of excellent talents and attainments. Three of them were subsequently settled over rural congregations of the Secession ; and the fourth went to America. Thus, in that class of six, the individual destinies shaped out by Providence were strikingly different ; and a class of 60 or 600 could not have more vividly illustrated the diversity of individual lots.

From an obscure and quiet family group, or from a small and harmonious class of students bound together by the same aims and sympathies, the

Power that distributes them thence over the earth, and assigns *what, where, and how long*, each shall do in his sphere of life, is not less easily recognised than in the scene of complex confusion and strife at BABEL, whence the human race was scattered everywhere to occupy unknown territories, and to work out as tribes and nations a distinctive history.

When Mr. Wilson, in opening the first Hall session at Perth, came before his six students, there was no such demonstration as welcomed the appearance of a University Professor to deliver his inaugural lecture. No imposing procession of gowned associates, led by a mace-bearing official, ushered him into the class-room; nor was there a crowd of pupils ready to start up and give him an enthusiastic reception.

New circumstances, however, may dispense with old ceremonies; and, as sprung from the ecclesiastical crisis through which the country was passing, and as connected with the Secession Church which had just been organized, the Hall at Perth needed no pompous inauguration. Simplicity in the opening of the Institution was most becoming. The Professor and his pupils met; and at once his work was begun. He needed no encouragement from the presence of a college

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Faculty ; and any outburst of shouts and hurrahs from a crowd of irrepressibly noisy students—even though the enthusiasm and the admiration expressed had been genuine—would have been far less dear and valuable to him than the deep sympathy which his six students cherished for him as one of the ‘Fathers of the Secession,’ and which moved them to receive him with reverent silence.

Nor had his Church a Theological Committee to surround Mr. Wilson with a circle of visages that might encourage him, and—at the same time confronting the students—might reinforce his professorial authority, and overawe the waywardness, levity, and rebellion natural to youth.

Yet, as he quietly took the chair, and began to address them, his students felt that he was resolute and prepared to work, and was possessed of influence, as well as dignity and authority, that would exact from them steady progress.

Sagaciously, and from his desire to do justice both to the unfolding of Christian truth and to the training of the minds that were under his charge, Mr. Wilson decided to take the *Medulla* of Markius (or Mark) of Leyden as his text-book, and to examine the students thoroughly upon the outlines and details of this theological system, while he



should occasionally give lectures upon its cardinal doctrines. Even then, as well as since, theological Professors within Scottish colleges followed another method of instruction; they constructed a theological system of their own, exhibiting and defending its outlines and details in lectures, which they wished to be regarded as chapters of an independent treatise, though neither that system nor its exposition showed the originality which alone could have warranted the attempt. They built 'upon another man's foundation;' nay, their superstructure, in its form and materials, was really 'another man's,' with the exception of a few petty novelties that were introduced with the design of giving to the structure an aspect of individuality. The system and the course of lectures formed a mere translation—a pile of synonymous words.

It would have been incomparably more useful (not to say more honourable) to have openly adopted an existing system of divinity—English, Dutch, or French—and to have carefully taught this to the students by the fullest and most searching examinations. Unless the Professor had a power of independent speculation over the field of Christian theology, allied, too, with such a constructive faculty as could place old and un-

deniable facts and truths in new relations and aspects, he would have been far more profitably employed in catechetical instructions upon a text-book,—and this text-book not the syllabus of his own lectures, but some one of the extant bodies of divinity which his judgment preferred.

Dr. Thomas Chalmers, though he irregularly possessed and had cultivated extraordinary faculties of speculation, construction, and illustration, found that in theology, as in ethics, there was neither a necessity nor an excuse for his attempting, in the tuition of candidates for the ministry, to raise and expound a theological system of his own; hence he spent a large proportion of the time of his class in examinations based upon the systems of older theologians, while all the lectures which he gave were upon the salient points of those systems,—such points as drew forth the concentrated force and the vehement energy of his reasoning, the bold sweep of his speculative, and the exuberance of his illustrative, intellect.

Something like Chalmers' was the method of tuition pursued in the new Divinity Hall at Perth. Mr. Wilson was perhaps more comprehensive and minute in his catechetical instructions than the illustrious modern, who, though pre-eminent as a master both in theology and in pulpit oratory, was

far from being a faultless or even a safe model in either. Mr. Wilson took care that the Dutch divine's system was not only examined in all its parts, but also fully understood and remembered by each student. It is not less probable, however, that his lectures on leading doctrines lacked the immense power and the intense animation which made those of Chalmers irresistible orations.

The Perth Professor may have been led to give a prominence to examinations, partly by the small number of students who attended him in the Hall's first session. Yet, though regular lecturing before a group of six students might seem rather ludicrous, Mr. Wilson, as one of the 'Four Fathers of Secession' who had constituted themselves into the 'Associate Presbytery,' and assumed 'judicial' functions, would not have attached much weight to such a consideration. Partly, too, he might be induced by reports of the success of Dr. Philip Doddridge, who at Northampton was rearing candidates for the ministry by a system that combined examining with lecturing. We believe, however, that he was more influenced by what he knew of Bishop Burnet, who, when Professor of Divinity in Glasgow University, set an example worthy of all imitation. 'On Mondays he made each of the students read a head of divinity in Latin, and

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prepare such theses from it as he was to defend against the rest of the students ; and this exercise concluded with a Latin oration from the Professor. On Tuesdays he gave them a prelection in the same language, wherein he proposed to have gone through a complete course of divinity. On Wednesdays he read them a lecture for above an hour, by way of a critical commentary on St. Matthew's Gospel, which he had completed before he quitted that chair. On Thursdays the exercise was alternate. On Sunday he expounded a Hebrew psalm, comparing it with the Septuagint, the Vulgar, and the English version ; and the next Thursday he explained some part of the ritual and constitution of the primitive Church, making the apostolical canons his text, and reducing every article of practice under the head of one or other of these canons. On Fridays he made each of his scholars in course preach a short sermon on some text he assigned ; and when it was ended, he observed upon anything that was defective or amiss, showing how the text ought to be opened and applied. This was the morning labour. In the evenings, after prayer, he every day read them some portion of Scripture, on which he made a short discourse ; and when that was over, he examined into the progress of their several studies, encouraging them

to propose their several difficulties to him upon the subjects they were reading. This he performed during the whole time the schools were open, thereby answering the duty of a Professor with the assiduity of a schoolmaster ; and to acquit himself with credit, he was obliged to study from four to ten in the morning, the rest of the day being either allotted to the use of his students, or to hear the complaints of the clergy, who, finding that he had interest with men in power, were not sparing in their applications.' (An extract from Bishop Burnet's *Life*, quoted in Professor Jardine's *Outlines of Philosophical Education*.)

Offensive as prelacy and prelates were to the first Seceders, such a singularly vigorous, wise, and faithful professorship as that exhibited for several years by Bishop Burnet, must have won the fervid admiration of Mr. Wilson ; and admiration moved him to 'go and do likewise.'

As a proof of the new Professor's scholarship, and of the labour which he took, and at the same time a proof of the scholarship and the industry of his group of students, there is the fact that the entire business of the class was conducted in Latin—the language in which the Dutch divine had prepared his system of Christian truth. We need not here ask whether it would not have been

better, both for Professor and for students, that the English language had been employed in the lectures and examinations, for the question can have only one answer—that he would have communicated to them a far larger amount of more definite instruction in more impressive forms. The English, even as known and used by Professor and by students, was a broader, clearer, and more sympathetic medium, through which thought could pass in exchange between them. Even their English was a spacious glass mirror, unspotted and undimmed, while their Latin was a small surface of rusty steel. It has indeed been said, that to Scottish clergymen of 1737 the English language was virtually a foreign one; they thought in native Scotch, and then translated this into English, the ideas and sentiments becoming cold and stiff in the process. Still, compared with their Latin (which was dead as well as foreign), how copious and ready, how flexible and animated, must have been their English!

Mr. Wilson had, by regular and long-continued reading of the Roman classics, and of the theological works that were written in Latin by continental divines, acquired great facility and accuracy in his use of that language. He could read, write, and speak it with ease, though not

with the force and elegance of his own countryman Buchanan, or even of many English churchmen who had gone through an Oxford or Cambridge course.

Scottish ministers were then much more closely acquainted than now with the theological works that have been written in Latin; for at that time, the largest amount, if not the best kind, of theological literature was preserved in that language. Ministers had, therefore, the strongest motive for keeping up and extending their mastery over Latin; whereas now, they too commonly, after their student-days, engage in little or no Latin reading, and soon lose all the power which they had acquired at school and college over the language. There is in our day such an immense and invaluable theological library in English, that any Latin supplement may be regarded as superfluous. Certainly, unless there were other and more cogent reasons for clergymen acquiring and ever maintaining a thorough familiarity with Latin and its masterpieces, the consideration that it enshrines the chief treasures of theology is no longer valid.

For Mr. Wilson and his students, however, Latin was the key to the best specimens then extant of systematic, exegetical, controversial, and practical theology; hence the Professor laboured to

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make and to keep them good Latin scholars, in order that they might be good theologians. As his prelections were in Latin, it was necessary for him to ascertain that they were attentively listened to and fully understood by each student; and he took care that his questions should be met—not by an easy *yea* or *nay*—but by answers that contained the propositions and arguments that had been inquired about. The clothing of those answers in *extempore* Latin was an exercise that would test and improve their scholarship.

There is no account as to how the students were lodged in Perth; nor could there be a difficulty in ‘billeting’ such a small force. Perhaps, as in a later generation, they were received as guests by some of the wealthier members of the Professor’s congregation. In such a town, residence for study could not be other than pleasant, and their intercourse with each other must have been peculiarly close and friendly. Few in number, and not only secluded from secular pursuits, but separated from the old colleges and all other students of theology,—they, the six students of a new Divinity Hall, who aspired to become the ministers of a Church that had recently sprung into existence, must have felt bound to each other in no common brotherhood. This would be strengthened by their daily meet-



ings in private as well as in the class-room, by their frequent rambles, and their more prolonged Saturday excursions over and beyond the romantic districts that surround the 'fair city.' Nor were they kept at a distance from their Professor, who spontaneously relaxed from his dignity and the pressure of his labours, and encouraged them to regard him as a friend. An ever-ready and copious theme of talk for students, either with each other or with a genial Professor, is *current and recent literature*; but 1737 was an era fallow for literature in England, and with a still more extended barrenness for Scotland. Johnson and Goldsmith had not yet appeared; and Hume, Robertson, and Adam Smith belonged to a more distant future. Addison and Pope would have been hackneyed subjects of conversation to any but young men—except in the point of style; and Professors delighted to descant on the style of the *Spectator*, as the best that then challenged a comparison. Literature, having at that period no fresh or commanding claims, would soon give place to the Scottish ecclesiastical events that were of immediate and peculiar interest to all the speakers—more especially in the presence of their Professor, whom Providence had made a leading actor in those events, through his conscience making him

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a martyr. Adam Gib and his enthusiastic companions would allude with reverence and deep emotion to the causes and leaders of the Secession movement, in the presence of the Rev. William Wilson, who could say '*quorum pars magna fui.*'

In the second and all the succeeding sessions of the Hall at Perth, *six* was the average number of *new* students. This annual addition to the list of previous students who had not yet finished their divinity course, soon gave the Professor a class respectable in the number of its members—indeed, nearly as large as at the time attended any of the divinity Professors within our Scottish Universities.

In the second session (1738) the Hall was joined by one youth who left it after ten days. From discussions which he had in talking with Mr. Wilson—probably upon National Covenanting and the solemn engagement of the 'League' to 'extirpate' prelacy, popery, etc. etc.—he found that he could not acquiesce in the Secession views, which upon this subject were at the time rigid, if not rather intolerant, through a removal of the subject from its place of *subordinate* to one of *primary* importance. Subsequently, the name which he bore, THOMAS GILLESPIE, became historical, and has long been honoured as that of the founder of the *Relief* denomination. We see him

in 1738, as a student, withdrawing from that *Secession* which was destined 109 years afterwards to be incorporated with the *Relief*, under the name of the United Presbyterian Church.

Secession from a Church, even when not only altogether justifiable, but absolutely indispensable, is apt to generate divisions: and soon good men cannot 'walk together,' unless every step be exactly in tune. The man who is constrained to leave a National Church, either by her persecution, or by his own conscience as aggrieved by her heresies or her intolerant and incorrigible spirit, finds that the same step had been taken by others who have since organized a new Church. If he should differ from this new Church in one or two subordinate points—points that are wholly insignificant when compared with the many and palpable differences which led to his reluctant or enforced withdrawal from his old Church—he will decline to join the new Church, but will prefer to make another and a newer one,—so nicely scrupulous and fastidious his conscience has become! After one Secession, sects multiply—growing out of themselves (as the Burgher and the Anti-Burgher out of the Secession); or, when they do spring directly from the original Church, they refuse to be united to any existing sect, but insist on remaining isolated.

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On Sunday, 17th May 1740, the last month of their session, the students witnessed a scene in Perth which they never forgot: they saw their Professor shut out by magisterial authority from the church in which he had preached for the whole quarter of a century; they saw him retire without the loss either of dignity or of influence; and they, in the midst of the vast crowd that loyally attended him, followed him to the 'Glovers' yard,' and listened to the thrilling services which he then conducted! The people had at first, in their indignation, been ready to force an entrance for their minister, and several, probably, of his students, in the impetuosity of youth, would have eagerly joined in such a measure; but Mr. Wilson promptly rebuked and suppressed all tendencies to resist the magisterial execution of the General Assembly's decree, by remarking in clear tones, and with calm and commanding mien, that 'the Master whom he served was the Prince of Peace.' That scene outside, yet close to the church, would be longer remembered than many a solemn service within the church, or any of his wise prelections in the Divinity Hall.

Mr. Wilson's career as Professor was but brief, ending after his fifth session. He died towards the close of 1741, at the age of fifty-one, lamented by

his students, his congregation, and the ministers and congregations of the Secession, all of which parties long and admiringly remembered the many great services with which he had burdened himself to benefit them and the common cause. It was an *early* death for a divinity Professor. A divinity Professor is not, indeed, guaranteed against the uncertainty and brevity of life, nor has he any special promise of 'length of days.' Still, it is a fact that few divinity Professors *die* so early as at the age of fifty-one: and the easy explanation is, that few men have been chosen to be divinity Professors at that age, for the wish of Churches is to have—in a Professor—experience rather than power; cautious gravity, rather than enthusiasm; well-considered moralizings, rather than boldly-sustained speculations; gathered leaves of proverbs, rather than the fresh vegetation that makes the whole tree a mass of foliage; and the careful gleanings of age, rather than the flush and luxuriance of the prime.

The Rev. ALEXANDER MONCRIEFF, another of the four originators of the Secession, was appointed by the Associate Presbytery to succeed Mr. Wilson; and the Hall was removed from Perth to Abernethy, which had been, and continued to be, the sphere of the new Professor's zealous ministry, and

in the neighbourhood of which was the Culfargie estate, that, with its spacious mansion-house, came to be inherited by him from a long line of ancestors. Not a few of these, like himself and several of his successors in the inheritance, were ministers and landed proprietors; and the people, looking up with double esteem to him as both laird and minister, were wont to speak of him as 'Culfargie.' His students fell into the same custom, and talked to each other about the force and animation with which 'Culfargie' lectured, and the skill and thoroughness with which 'Culfargie' examined. Nor were they silent about 'Culfargie's' fascinating frankness and cordiality in social life or in domestic seclusion; and the pleasantries, alternating with the abrupt and impetuous serious utterances of 'Culfargie' at the head of his own table (which seldom during the three months' session of the Hall lacked the presence of a group of students), were duly commemorated. Generally, it would be neither unpleasant nor unprofitable for students of our day to have a 'Culfargie,' a laird-professor, who should dispense instruction and entertainment in the midst of elegant hospitalities, taking care that whatever was rather solid and heavy should *not* be in the conversation, and that whatever was unsubstantial, light, and scanty should

not be in the 'viands;' so that the guests might not rise from a Barmecide feast and the dullest table-talk over statistics about each student's birth-place, minister, etc. etc.!

At the time of electing a new occupant of the Theological Chair, neither then nor afterwards does Ralph Erskine of Dunfermline seem to have met with a due recognition of his qualifications, though these were comparatively of a high order, and should have made him a formidable rival to any candidate. Vivacity and versatility of intellect are often incorrectly judged to belong to superficiality; whereas dulness and a want of brilliancy pass for profundity. The former qualities are still more frequently associated with a censurable levity of nature; and the latter with a commendable earnestness. Ralph Erskine's gifts and exercises were far beyond the clerical and ecclesiastical routine; he was capable of, and he delighted in, both poetry and music. These, as developed and employed, may, in the view of his brethren, have been inconsistent with the gravity of a theological Professor's functions. His volume entitled *Faith no Fancy*, displays great talents for metaphysical and theological discussion, and for making this intelligible and interesting to the popular mind; but then, he wrote verses, though these

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were *Gospel Sonnets* ; and he played on the fiddle, though this was the big, the bass, fiddle, to which his elders had been reconciled on account of its size and its deep tones !

We are inclined to believe that, in the case of the two Erskines, the popular preference of the younger brother Ralph is, on general intellectual grounds, more justifiable than the clerical preference of the elder brother Ebenezer. Ebenezer has a more sustained power of thought ; but it never rises to the heights which Ralph occasionally reaches, as it never falls to the depths which too often receive Ralph. Ralph had genius, but genius with a defective constitution and a most irregular action ; while the taste that guided it was rude, yet perverse, and the garb of language which it wore was enough to conceal or to spoil any grace or grandeur. Still, through every adverse influence and association, it puts forth an unequivocal power. Its presence in the Theological Hall would have been invaluable.

On other grounds, it may be asked why *Mr. Fisher* (who had just been translated from Kinclaven to Glasgow) was not appointed *Mr. Wilson's* immediate successor ; for, unquestionably, there was in *Mr. Fisher* more of the first Professor's intellectual culture and refinement than in any of the



brethren, while there was no less of exact and systematized acquaintance with theology. Indeed, this—the youngest of the ‘Four Fathers of Secession’—was the foremost in mental development and literary polish, as his writings will show. Each of the four had high qualifications for a professorship ; and probably the principle which ruled the successive appointments to the chair was a regard for *seniority*. Ebenezer Erskine was much older than his brethren ; but obviously he regarded himself as too old for the office, and though he would be strongly urged to become the first Professor, he declined ; and ten years afterwards, when a Professor suddenly fell to be chosen for the third time, he reluctantly yielded to the wish of his brethren, and in a year gave up the appointment. His younger brother Ralph was considerably older than the other members of the Associate Presbytery, and must have felt, like Ebenezer, that due efficiency could only be expected from a more youthful Professor. At the time of the first election Mr. Wilson was forty-five, Mr. Moncrieff was forty, and Mr. Fisher was thirty-eight ; hence, as they were all in their most vigorous prime, the principle of seniority was wisely honoured, and in accordance with it was the order of their accession to the chair ; whereas the two Erskines felt that they were too

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far advanced in years to undertake the professorship in addition to their pastorate over large congregations, Ralph being fifty, and Ebenezer fifty-five at the time.

Mr. Moncrieff, however, in addition to his being in the prime of life, had the talents and learning, the energy and piety, requisite for the professorship to which he was appointed as Wilson's successor in February 1742—less than a month before he would need to be in the full discharge of its duties.

He had gone through, at St. Andrews, a complete University course ; and this he supplemented by a year's hard study at Leyden, under the guidance of Mark and other distinguished teachers there. The interest which he took in sound evangelical doctrine, and the ability with which he could defend it against subtle error, were shown during his residence in Holland,—for at that time the case of Professor Simson had been first brought before the General Assembly, and young Moncrieff, grieved and indignant at the Assembly's leniency, wrote and published, in exposure of Simson's views, an elaborate pamphlet, which won the high admiration of Mark and other eminent theologians in Holland.

Nor, after entering upon his ministry at Abernethy, were his studies either relaxed or wholly directed to the professional function of sermon-

writing ; but he zealously continued them, with the aim of developing and furnishing his own mind, and of more clearly understanding that system of Christian truth which was being 'wounded in the house of its friends'—and was receiving faint and apathetic support within the General Assembly itself. He was of a peculiarly bold and impetuous nature, which quickly flamed forth in the presence of wrong-doing or meanness ; and this, chastened but not extinguished by his constant devotion to theological inquiry, he carried into his ministerial and ecclesiastical life. Wilson's application of the prophet's vision of four character-faces to the Four Fathers of Secession had a special felicity in Mr. Moncrieff's case ; Mr. Moncrieff had 'the face of a lion.' He was undaunted by opposition, and in the days of the 'killing time' between the Restoration and the Revolution, would have rivalled his grandfather as a hero-martyr. How defiantly as well as bravely did he confront the Rebellion of 1745, and openly champion the House of Hanover, though he was threatened with such losses as none of his brethren were exposed to !

About this time Scotland received her first visit from *George Whitefield*. We are neither called on nor inclined to intermeddle with the quarrel which sprung up between him and the Seceders. The

Erskines and their associates, on very slight and narrow grounds, opposed and denounced the great English evangelist and his mission to Scotland ; and it was equally unfortunate for him that some excellent and zealously evangelical ministers within the Established Church, and a still larger number of their moderate and anti-evangelical brethren, supported and applauded him from the contemptible motive of spiting and injuring the Seceders! The 'kisses' of his Established Church patrons and defenders must have been as unwelcome to him as the 'blows' of his Seceding opponents ; and the descendants of neither party in Scotland can afford to remember with any satisfaction or pride the reception given to Whitefield !

Our object, however, in noticing the arrival of the famous preacher is simply to point to the signal advantages which might have been derived by the young men who were under training for the ministry, as well as by those who had recently entered upon its functions.

Whitefield's *oratory* — at least the whole of oratory that comes under the term of *delivery* — was matchless. Whatever (and it is a small and indefinite part) of oratory is fashioned within *the brain*, seems in Whitefield to have been far from remarkable, for the substance of thought in his

sermons was neither strong nor fine ; but when this came forth from the passions of his heart, the tones of his magnificent yet exquisite voice, the expressions of his face, and the gestures of his body, it became unique and irresistible—seizing upon, possessing and ruling, with inevitable sway, the sympathies and energies of every hearer, and the tide of excited sentiment in the whole audience ! Whitefield's elocution was unrivalled,—Garrick, whose singular competency as a judge was sharpened by envy, confessing that nothing equal to it had ever been heard from the stage, the bar, the senate, or the pulpit ! It was articulate sound, with all the rush of eloquence and all the melody of song. A sentence or a word spoken as Whitefield spoke it, had a power which no other man could give it ; and that power was invariable and universal.

To have an opportunity of hearing Whitefield preach, should have been—for divinity students and young preachers—a far greater privilege than to attend a complete course of elaborate lectures on rhetoric. It has often been contended that every Divinity Hall should have a chair for rhetoric and elocution, in order that young men should be duly trained both to compose and to deliver sermons ; but then there was the difficulty to find a man who could, like a De Quincey, expound the

principles and laws, and exhibit the models of rhetoric, and at the same time read his lectures and recite illustrative passages like a Kemble, a Young, or a Macready.

Incomparably more influential than such a course of lectures, even as read by accomplished elocutionists, would have been a sermon from Whitefield, — for this sermon, while marked by commonplace thinking (though the animation of his delivery would at the time prevent this from being observed), would vividly communicate the spirit in which it had been meditated and in which it was delivered, and the delivery would never be forgotten.

Whether the students of the Hall at Abernethy availed themselves of the priceless privilege of listening to the Whitefield oratory does not appear. They were at a distance from the places where Whitefield preached ; but at that time, and long afterwards, Seceders did not scruple to travel hundreds of miles to hear some favourite ministers. Perhaps they were interdicted from hearing the man whom the Fathers of their Church so vehemently censured ; and though they might anticipate no difficulty in soothing their own conscience for a disregard of the prohibition, the prospect of a scrutiny and cross-examination by the Professor

and the Presbytery had its terrors, whilst they had no hope that the inquisitors would be satisfied by the plea that they attended the Methodist's preaching for the sake of its lessons in eloquence.

Adam Gib had now been ordained, and was the first, and as yet the only minister of the Secession in Edinburgh, though he had under his charge more than 1200 members in full communion. It may be doubted if—when Mr. Whitefield was preaching three or four times a day to crowded assemblies in Edinburgh—Mr. Gib had so far subdued his sectarian irritation as once to become a hearer either openly or in some Zaccheus fashion ; yet he, more than almost any other of his brethren, had oratorical faculties that could have been stimulated and otherwise improved by his listening to the English preacher's unapproachable delivery.

Still, passing away for a moment from the Secession ministers who refused to hear Whitefield, to the many Established Church clergymen both in England and in Scotland who did listen to his preaching, it is a curious fact that none of his clerical hearers have been moved to leave either a description or a critical account of the constituents and the characteristics of his marvellous oratory. What influence upon, or improvement in, their own preaching those clerical hearers might derive from

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Whitefield's sermons, has been left equally undefined by themselves or by others.

When the Divinity Hall met at Abernethy in March, after Mr. Moncrieff's appointment, the previous annual average of *new* students was maintained; and in the next two sessions this was increased from *six* to *seven*, and to *eleven*, and this accession to the students of former years who had not yet completed their course, formed a large class.

Like his predecessor, Mr. Moncrieff took for his text-book the *Medulla* of Mark,—a theological system which he, when a student at Leyden, had heard orally expounded by Mark himself, and to which he was drawn not less by his mature judgment than by his youthful memories and associations.

He was more didactic than speculative, and this tendency was allied with a singular intensity of devotional moods, enabling him to realize vividly that he was ever 'in the great Taskmaster's eye.' Often in the course of his preaching did the idea of God's presence take such sudden and entire possession of his soul, that he made an involuntary and unconscious pause, during which he was withdrawn from his crowded congregation, and no longer saw or addressed his hearers. Once, when in the pulpit



he stood thus withdrawn from the sphere of 'things visible' into the sphere of 'things invisible,' and his aspect not less than his silence indicated the depths of his abstraction, a woman whispered to her neighbour, 'See ; Culfargie is away to heaven, and left us all sitting here !' In the Divinity Hall, too, his devoutness was not less absorbing ; and when the solemn strain in which he was addressing his pupils suddenly broke off, as the 'eternal realities' that formed his theme pressed with overwhelming force upon his mind, the deep hush that fell upon the company of young men showed that Culfargie was revered and loved not less by his students than by the members of his congregation. Had such 'pauses' been purely rhetorical, and for the sake of effect, the congregation might have been deceived once or twice ; but the students would have instantly discovered the unworthy trick, and scornful laughter would have greeted the Professor in his corner of affected abstraction. The language that was blasphemously addressed by a jeering crowd of the young to the prophet Elisha would have been justly applied to the man who pretended to be in the unconsciousness of a devotional 'rapture'—'Go up, thou bald head, go up !' The 'silence' described, instead of being 'golden,' would have been the most wretched counterfeit, more worthless even

than 'sounding brass.' But to Mr. Moncrieff's nature, which was morally and intellectually robust in a high degree, all affectation was alien, and such affectation in devotion would have been unspeakably revolting. Nobody, not even his bitterest enemy, dared to question the simple sincerity of his intensely devout moods, for these moods were in keeping with his Christian character and life, and that sincerity was also peculiar to his nature as a man.

The influence of such devoutness as the Professor's was specially valuable in the Divinity Hall, where not the least of the daily difficulties is to preserve a reverence in thought and feeling, and where the short prayers that are offered at the beginning and at the close of the several meetings each day, tend to become mere ceremonial bows to Deity.

Mr. Moncrieff commented, rather than lectured, upon the *Medulla* of Mark; and his strength was chiefly expended upon the statement and defence of the leading facts and truths of that system. Some of these—such as the divinity of Jesus Christ, that had already drawn him forth as a stripling champion—received his most vigorous, skilful, and enthusiastic defence, in the few elaborate prelections from the chair.

The comments, however, and the examinations upon the system of the Leyden divine, seem to have been carried on in *English*; and we must regard this innovation as a decided improvement. The text-book being in Latin, the students could only know its contents both in outline and detail through an exact acquaintance with that language; and though the Professor's comments and queries were conveyed in English, this would enable the Professor to test more severely the knowledge which each student had acquired both of the Latin and of Mark's *Medulla*. The Perth method might make better *Latinists*; the Abernethy method better *theologians*.

Mr. Moncrieff, advancing in the path which had been marked out by his predecessor, took special and increasing care of the discourses and the critical and exegetical exercises that were delivered or read annually by each student. The young men were to be trained in the exact interpretation of the Bible and in the powerful preaching of the gospel; and they were to go forth from the Hall as 'workmen who,' in either capacity, 'needed not to be ashamed.' To this department of Hall duty—the preparation of young men for *pulpit-work*—Mr. Wilson devoted more time and attention than had been given in the Divinity Halls of the Established

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Church ; and Mr. Moncrieff was more solicitous still that the occupations of each session should directly tend to make the students most persuasive preachers and faithful ministers. A large proportion of the Hall time was spent in the hearing and criticizing of those exercises by students that are meant to be tentatives and experiments in preaching. Immediately after a discourse had been delivered *memoriter*, or an exercise had been read by a student, and before the Professor had expressed his judgment upon its merits, an opportunity was afforded to members of the class to state summarily or in detail what they thought of their companion's performance. Students were invited and expected to offer free, if fair, strictures ; and on most occasions the discourse had received a comprehensive and searching criticism, in which both its merits and defects were pointed out, before the Professor entered upon his judicial estimate.

This ancient and long-continued custom of the students acting as critics, has of late been abandoned ; but we doubt if it had such a preponderance of evils over advantages as to warrant this fate. It would be of no use to the *student criticized* if he looked to the chair alone for a judgment upon his performance ; but there are few students who are so indifferent to the opinion of the ablest

of their coevals, and who hang so completely to the skirts of their professor. Besides, a professor is apt to have merely three or four stereotyped critiques, and with one of these he accommodates every discourse that comes before him, though in many a case it may be somewhat of a 'mis-fit ;' whereas students—having no stock of pattern-critiques—must attempt to suit their criticism to the discourse, and not the discourse to their criticism. As to whether the custom was useful or not to the *student-critics* in enabling them to form a judgment fairly and promptly, and to express it clearly, coherently, and fluently, we shall not presume to decide. It might be undignified for the professor—who was not merely the arch-critic, but the sole authoritative critic ; not the mere foreman of the jury, but himself the jury and the judge—to sit listening to the crude opinions of a succession of raw students, as if these were helping him to form a correct judgment ; and yet, apart from the question of his dignity, it might be eminently advantageous for him, as their teacher and guide, to have the talents, attainments, and views of individual students so naturally exhibited as in the oft-recurring scene of criticism.

For long this criticism was generally, and with interest and energy, engaged in, the Professor

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encouraging as well as directing it. It flourished so late as in the days of the professorship of the Rev. John Brown of Haddington, but reached a state of decay during the professorship of Dr. Lawson of Selkirk, who yet might have been expected to give it new vigour ; and decay went on until it was such a death in life, that at length its formal extinction could occasion no regret.

Contemporary with the beginning of Mr. Moncrieff's professorship, and probably at his suggestion, was the starting of another class—a class for instruction in philosophy. The Seceding brethren more than suspected that philosophy, as taught in the most influential of our Scottish Universities, had principles and bearings that were either openly or insidiously hostile to Christianity. Their fears were not removed by the fact that the chairs of philosophy were generally occupied by *clergymen*, who—in spite of the superior qualifications of several laymen to be professors—long enjoyed a monopoly of University teaching, even in the arts department ; for though those clergymen might have neither original powers nor boldly speculative tendencies, yet they manifested a liking for theories that ignored or contradicted the principles of natural and revealed religion, and clerical dulness in a philosophy chair was no guarantee for safe

philosophical teaching. It was then judged expedient by the Secession leaders that a philosophical class should be formed in connection with the Divinity Hall ; and it opened at once in the spring of 1742. It was conducted neither by the Professor nor by one of his clerical brethren, but by a student of approved (or rather of hopeful) competency. For the first session the post was held by Mr. Archibald ; and for the next four or five years by Mr. David Wilson, whose instructions seem to have been much prized. Originally, attendance upon this class was confined to two years, but subsequently it was extended to three years. We cannot learn whether the course of instruction dealt with logic and metaphysics as well as with moral philosophy ; but it is probable that it was far from being scrupulously exclusive, and that, disregarding landmarks and boundaries, it touched upon everything that could be called philosophy — and a great deal besides. The teacher was enjoined to occupy the first year in carefully revising and enlarging the *classical attainments* of the students ; hence it may be inferred that, though ethics formed his centre, he took a very wide circumference. Those students who had gone through a philosophical course at a University were not compelled — they were but

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strongly 'recommended'—to attend this new class ; and before entering upon the study of divinity, they were subjected to a severe examination both as to their proficiency in philosophy and as to the soundness of their philosophical principles and views, while their mastery over Greek and Latin was rigorously tested. The Presbytery, along with the Professor of Theology, exercised a strict superintendence over the philosophical class, and, through a special committee, periodically ascertained what progress the pupils were making.

The remuneration of the teacher was not, for the period, illiberal. At his appointment he received from the Presbytery fund £6 ; and this payment is supposed to have been repeated each session. From each student a fee of five shillings quarterly was exacted, while the double of this sum was expected from such students as could afford it.

A confident judgment cannot now be pronounced upon this experiment. *First*, was it at all *necessary* ? Were there real grounds for the suspicion that University professors of philosophy were inculcating dangerous errors, and seeking to corrupt or to destroy the Christian religion ? Was it not a false alarm—similar to that which long afterwards induced not a few of the Secession ministers to deny to their sons, who were studying



for the ministry, the inestimable privilege of attending the lectures of DUGALD STEWART? But, *secondly*, even if the suspicions were well founded, was the expedient wise and likely to prove efficient? Was the antidote sufficient for the bane? The teaching of a student, after he has been ascertained to know more of philosophy than his companions, might neither be enlightened nor influential; and whatever it might intrinsically be, would not his fellow-students, in the character of pupils, under-value or despise it?

The experiment made by the early Seceders seems to have been followed and extended by the leaders of the Free Church, who provided for their students such instruction in logic, metaphysics, and ethics as was expected to prepare them specially for entering upon the study of theology; but men fully qualified to rival the University professors, and not mere students, were appointed. Yet this Free Church experiment proved unsuccessful; and in a few years the Free Church was glad to transfer her professors of logic, metaphysics, and moral philosophy to the University, within which they afterwards taught the same divisions of philosophical knowledge.

We have, indeed, often thought that, in immediate connection with a Divinity Hall, a chair

founded with the view of showing the bearings of philosophy and of philosophical studies upon theology, would be of great value; but as yet anything like this has never been attempted by any ecclesiastical denomination. In such a chair Dr. John Cairns would have rendered services, both to his faith and to his Church, far more distinguished than those which, as a teacher of theology, he could have performed. Hitherto, however, that one chair has been omitted, and its all-important functions undischarged; though, had a Cairns been placed in it so early as in 1850, great results might already have been recorded. Philosophy, mental and moral, in its various relations to theology, has never received an elaborate exposition; nor have students, after passing from their four years' arts *curriculum*, been duly initiated into the theological significance of this long term of preliminary study.

Towards the close of 1743, the Associate Presbytery numbered *nineteen ministers*; and in the autumn of the following year, these resolved on constituting themselves into 'the Associate Synod,' consisting of three Presbyteries—the Presbyteries of Dunfermline, Glasgow, and Edinburgh—in order that they might more promptly, easily, and satisfactorily overtake the large and multifarious

business which came before them. The Presbytery of Dunfermline was then made up of eight ministers and of eight lay elders, while *nine* vacant congregations were under its charge; the Presbytery of Glasgow had also eight ministers and eight lay elders, along with four vacant congregations, and all the *Irish* congregations that might hereafter be formed; and the Presbytery of Edinburgh consisted of ten ministers and ten lay elders, along with the charge of three vacant congregations in Scotland, and of all the congregations that might be formed in England. This statement will give an idea of the steady progress of the Secession. The four Fathers were, at the time of the Associate Synod's formation, multiplied into twenty-six clergymen and twenty-six lay elders, with about forty-two congregations.

In the next year (1745) occurred what was called the second, *the great rebellion*. How both the ministers and the people of the Secession met it, is amply testified by contemporary history; and we can add that the Seceding students were among the earliest and the most stalwart of the volunteers who rallied round the house of Hanover and the Protestant cause. Their Professor set them a bold example, and the venerable Ebenezer Erskine himself did not scruple, in the hour and scene of

danger, to appear in military costume. The Seceders were without any Jacobite sympathy, and zealously gave an undivided support to the Duke of Cumberland. They knew well that, if the invasion had been successful, something infinitely worse than the bloody sequel of Culloden would have been the result.

Those, however, whom the civil war of 1745 left, as it found, firmly united, were on the eve of being miserably broken up by a paltry and senseless dispute over a clause in the 'oath' of some burgesses [those of Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Perth]. That clause pledged each person taking the oath to support *the true religion presently professed within this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof*. Two opposite views were entertained of this special clause ; one party in the Associate Synod holding that Seceders could not consistently swear or subscribe it, and another party maintaining that there was nothing in the terms of the clause to offend the conscience of any Seceder. The former party got the name of Anti-Burghers, and they regarded acquiescence in the oath as nullifying the Secession testimony ; their brethren of the latter party were called Burghers, though they had no special liking for the oath, but wished that the whole matter should be one for mutual forbearance.

Out of this small affair came 'the Breach' of

1746, with two Churches and two Divinity Halls. The Professor of Theology—the Rev. Alexander Moncrieff—at once joined the Anti-Burgher party, carrying off all his students, though he was at the same time cut off from the two Erskines and from Mr. Fisher. The Divinity Hall of the Secession had only been about ten years in existence when this ‘Breach’ occurred.

Henceforth the Secession cause flows, for more than seventy years, in two separate streams, from two Divinity Halls as their fountainheads.

Hitherto there had been no bursary or scholarship, but from the very beginning of the Secession a fund had been liberally provided for the assistance of promising but poor students; and the task of distributing it was wisely and delicately performed. A young man’s talents and acquirements could at that time be discovered without examination papers, and their magical values of ‘merit’ ranging in uncertainty between a hard-drawn *maximum* and *minimum*,—a process which can deal with nothing but mere *cram!* and the fund of pecuniary help for him could be effectively and honestly administered without the curious public being regularly favoured with lists to show who were the donors and who were the receivers. The giving hand was not kissed; nor was the receiving hand pitied.

## CHAPTER III.

1747-1820.

The Split into two Churches and two Divinity Halls, the Anti-Burgher and the Burgher—The ANTI-BURGHER Divinity Hall, as taught successively by Rev. Alexander Moncrieff (father), William Moncrieff (son), Archibald Bruce, and George Paxton, at Abernethy, Alloa, Whitburn, and Edinburgh—Occasional teaching in the Philosophical Class, and the Synod's prompt dealings.

IN following the history of our Divinity Hall, we cannot overlook the sad effects of the 'Breach' of 1747. A quarrel within a loving family, or within a very small and select Christian brotherhood, is marked by the most deadly animosity; and the *Burgess oath* dispute, arising within the young Secession Church, divided those who had been sacredly bound together by a fellowship of faith, testimony, and suffering. We see the Divinity Hall, which in 1747 was merely ten years old, and which had been organized and put into working order, first at Perth and next at Abernethy, SPLIT INTO TWO DIVINITY HALLS, the Anti-Burgher

Hall at once appropriating the former Professor, Mr. Moncrieff, and all the existing Hall arrangements at Abernethy, while the Burgher Hall, compelled to look out for a new Professor, fixed upon the venerable leader of Secession—Ebenezer Erskine himself—and invited all students who might adhere to the Burgher party to meet at Stirling, there to study under the care of the first and the noblest man who originated the Secession. What a sacrifice it must have been to the Rev. Alexander Moncrieff, Professor of Theology, to separate from the only two surviving ‘Fathers of Secession’ (Ebenezer Erskine and James Fisher), and from Ralph Erskine, who attended the Gairney Bridge Presbytery, can now be only faintly imagined.

The Anti-Burgher Synod, regarding itself as the true and only ‘Associate Synod’ of the Secession, naturally continued Mr. Moncrieff as Professor; and the Anti-Burgher Divinity Hall met for its first session in 1748 at Abernethy. The ‘Breach’ was not yet indicated in any great reduction of the number of first year’s students, for in 1748 no fewer than *eight* formed the new accession. We have no means of knowing how many of the old students returned, or chose to enter the Burgher Divinity Hall, which in 1748 was taught at Stirling by Ebenezer Erskine.

In succeeding years, however, we can trace the effect of the division, the accession of new students being reduced to five in 1749, to six in 1750, to four in 1751, and to three in 1752 ; though afterwards, under the same Professor, it rose to its old average of six or seven.

We shall afterwards see that in the Burgher Divinity Hall the first year's students were for a considerable period still fewer in number, there being in some sessions no new students at all.

The Burghers were so eager for a reconciliation with their estranged brethren, that for a time they refrained from taking any steps that might give either a continuance or a sanction to the 'Breach.' Hoping that the dispute which had broken up the young Church might be settled as a matter of forbearance, and unity restored, they were unwilling to do anything that might prolong or even indicate their existence as another, a second sect. Hence, at first, they employed no means for attracting *new* students to their party, though they saw the necessity of at once providing instruction for such of the *old* students as chose to adhere to that party, rather than Mr. Moncrieff's. The appointment of Ebenezer Erskine to carry these old students through their course of theology was a temporary expedient ; and the desire was that soon



there might again be but one Secession Church, with one Divinity Hall, taught at Abernethy by Mr. Moncrieff. Thus, in the first session of 1748, the Anti-Burgher Divinity Hall must have had more of a complete and settled aspect than the Burgher institution.

Indeed, when in March of that year Mr. Moncrieff met his students, there was little before him to suggest the painful reflection that the Hall, like the Church, had been rent in twain; and that while he himself was severed and isolated in Church communion and ministerial work from such 'Fathers of the Secession' as the two Erskines and Fisher, the young men who were under training to become their brethren and their successors, had been separated from each other by a similar 'breach' in the 'school of the prophets.' To the Professor's eye, as he took a genial survey of his class at the beginning of the session of 1748, all things may have looked unchanged. If in the former years he had been honoured, at the opening of the Hall, with the presence of several of the Secession Fathers to assure him and his students of the deep interest which the Church and its ministers took in Hall work, then in 1748 the *absence* of such men at his side would make a blank which he could not fail

to see and to realize with the keenest pangs. That blank was caused—not by death, but by a more cruel interposition, a mutual estrangement that inflicts upon each of the parties a living death, and occasions a grief all the more bitter because it is borne by both, and borne without comfort. The absence of such ‘princes in Israel’ as the two Erskines—Ebenezer with his stately form, and his dignified yet genial countenance, and Ralph with more of fire and energy, though less of majesty than his elder brother—could not but be noted. It has not, however, been reported whether or not it had been a custom, during the first ten years of the Hall’s existence, for the Secession Fathers to attend at the opening of a session. We cannot say whether in 1748 Mr. Moncrieff’s eye would miss those Fathers, but his *mind* would inevitably recur to them, with the sad reflection that, at the very time when he was addressing his students at Abernethy, Ebenezer Erskine would be inaugurating a separate and rival seminary at Stirling, where the young men would be trained for the ministry of a Church that should grow up as completely isolated from his Church as he was now isolated from Ebenezer Erskine.

From the decisive views which Mr. Moncrieff had formed on the question of the ‘Burgess oath,’

and from his own ardent nature, as well as from the great excitement which the question had produced within the Secession sphere, it may be inferred that, in his prelections and examinations, he would occasionally turn from Mark's *Medulla* to discuss some of the bearings of the 'oath' upon Seceders and their 'testimony;' and such digressions on the part of the Professor would be warmly appreciated and applauded by the young zealots around him.

It says much for the abilities and influence of Mr. Moncrieff, both as a preacher and as a Professor, that in his days many young men belonging to the village and the parish of Abernethy devoted themselves to the work of the ministry. For years after he had been ejected from the parish church, and after a meeting-house for him with 1300 sittings had been erected, he preached in summer to a vast crowd in the churchyard, until this place of audience, too, was interdicted. It was probably when listening to the animated discourses which he delivered in the burying-ground, that not a few of the young had their susceptible minds seized upon by the ambition to become preachers.

It is also a striking fact, that two of the young men who had been brought up in the Secession

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congregation of Abernethy were subsequently chosen to be its pastors. It attests either a rare conjunction of talents and character on the part of these young men, or a rare freedom from local prejudices on the part of the Abernethy Seceders ; for the proverb that 'a prophet hath no honour in his own country' was not less true of Scotland in the eighteenth century than of Galilee in our Lord's time. Matthew Moncrieff, one of the Professor's sons, was chosen in the beginning of 1749 to be his father's colleague and successor in the pastorate of the Abernethy congregation. He had been a student in connection with the Established Church ; but in 1743—the second year of his father's professorship—he joined the Secession Divinity Hall at Abernethy. He was in the midst of his trials for licence as a probationer when the disastrous 'Breach' occurred, and, along with his father, he adhered to the Anti-Burgher section.

David Lawrie, a native of Abernethy, was chosen to be the fourth minister of the Secession congregation there. The third minister, to whom he was ordained colleague and successor, was Colin Brown, who had been born and reared in connection with a closely-adjoining congregation, and was thus almost a native of Abernethy. Beginning with the Professor, the laird of Culfargie, the first four

ministers of the Seceders at Abernethy laboured in or near the place of their nativity ; and there, where they had been most thoroughly known for the longest time, were they most highly valued and honoured.

In the same year (1747) that Professor Moncrieff's class was attended by his son and heir Matthew, who afterwards became his colleague and successor in the pastorate of the Abernethy congregation, it was attended by a younger son, William, who was subsequently ordained at Alloa, and with whom we shall soon have to deal as his father's successor in the theological professorship.

The philosophical class was, upon the disruption in the Associate Synod, still continued in the Anti-Burgher Hall at Abernethy, and under the teaching of some accomplished student ; but was never introduced into the Burgher Hall,—a circumstance which seems to support the idea that its adoption was suggested by Mr. Moncrieff in 1742, the first year of his professorship, and that its continuance in the Anti-Burgher Hall was urged by him in 1748.

In giving the early roll of philosophical teachers, it will be seen that some of the names gained a considerable reputation, though such students, on becoming ministers, might discontinue the

favourite researches of their youth : Messrs. R. Archibald (Haddington), D. Wilson (London), Dr. John M. Mason (New York), Alexander Pirie (Newburgh), James Bishop (Coupar-Angus), Isaac Ketchen (Nairn), John Smart (from Pathhead, Kirkcaldy), John Heugh (Stirling), and William Graham (Newcastle). Two of these, Dr. Mason of New York, and Graham of Newcastle, attained to celebrity—the former in his lifetime, and the latter long after his death, for he is still frequently lauded for his sagacious and forcible advocacy of Voluntary views a whole generation before Marshall of Kirkintilloch gave the signal of assault upon ecclesiastical establishments ; though, strangely enough, the grand power of logic and of eloquence that had been displayed by Milton on the subject, much more than a century before Graham appeared, was forgotten.

Of the remaining philosophical teachers—the great majority—to learn *now* that in the last century they were judged by the Synod of their Church well qualified to expound the various systems of philosophy, and to point out the defects or the dangerous errors, reveals in them youthful faculties, tastes, and acquirements that seem in after-life to have disappeared through neglect ; though in their pastoral studies and duties they

might, for the benefit of their fellow-men, have their minds more nobly engaged. The friends of some faithful minister, settled within a very obscure sphere, where, for the sake of the humble intellects which he must enlighten and of the obtuse natures which he must quicken and elevate, he feels himself constrained to forego all other knowledge but that of 'Christ crucified,' are greatly surprised when they come upon some relics of his old life at the University,—some medal or prize-book that tells of his high proficiency and of his rich promise in studies which he has long forsaken !

With such feelings do we now learn that model dispensers and exemplars of Christian doctrine and duty within humble rural districts—an 'Isaac Ketchen of Nairn' and a 'John Heugh of Stirling'—had, at the period of their attendance at the Divinity Hall, been selected by the representatives of their Church to act to their less accomplished companions as guides in philosophy through all the mazes and the snares of error, as armed champions of Christianity against hostile literature and philosophy, as so many *mailed Mr. Greathearts*, to lead and guard simple pilgrims through an enemy's country.

The teachers of the philosophy class received ample encouragement from the Professor of Theo-

logy. They knew, by experience, the generous heart and the open hand of the laird of Culfargie. Ever since the rise of the Secession in 1733 he had taken no stipend for his ministerial labours, though his large congregation had both the ability and the inclination to contribute a suitable maintenance; and the duties of the professorship he for twenty years discharged on the same terms. He not only, however, declined to receive any remuneration for all his labours in the service of the Secession cause, and bore all the expenses connected with his long and frequent journeys to the districts where he preached for the purpose of organizing or of encouraging new congregations, or of superintending the moderation of calls and the ordination of elders and of ministers; he also gave cheerfully and liberally to the various Presbytery and Synod funds that had been formed for the assistance of promising young men who had to struggle against straitened means for carrying on their studies, or of worthy brethren in the ministry, sorely tried by a precarious and scanty sustenance from their small flocks, and for the supplementing of the philosophical teacher's salary.

But in those days a man's charities could not be weighed, measured, or counted as precisely as were his talents.



His right hand could not 'know' what his left hand 'gave,' for both hands were busy in the work of giving; and there was no other friendly hand to register. The names of contributors and the sums contributed were not then published, for this method of 'provoking one another to good works' had not yet been thought of. The 'quality of mercy was not *strained*' by any device of or challenge to competition; it dropped as the gentle dew from heaven upon the place beneath. Culfargie's charities were not less spontaneous than were his ejaculatory prayers; at once they passed from his generous heart into the lot of the needy, blessing him that gave as well as him that took, and not a sympathy had been chilled by passing through an ostentatious medium.

Mr. Moncrieff was naturally of an athletic and hardy frame, that might have been expected to endure a great pressure of toil, and under this live on in vigour until the load of age and of age's infirmities supervened with aggravated effect. Yet, though there was a sound and sturdy manhood of soul to match that of his body, both had a constitutional ardour intense and unceasing, which not merely animated, but exhausted and consumed his physical strength. Into whatever he did he threw himself with all his zeal and energy, and his studies were conducted with the same unsparing

devotedness. Hence prematurely, before the age of sixty, he looked an old, worn-out man. Still all the vigour that remained was employed and tasked to its uttermost. There were then no monthly holidays each year for either young or old clergymen. In the summer of 1761 Mr. Moncrieff was painfully enfeebled, and did not conceal from friends his belief that the end was near. Yet all that he could do was done with all of his former energy that survived. Only a fortnight before his death, he undertook a journey of forty miles, to give counsel and pecuniary help to a struggling congregation that had lost its pastor. This last ride of *Culfargie's* was not less worthy of his goodwill and benevolence, than the last ride which John Bunyan took on an errand of peacemaking between an alienated father and son. A day or two after his return, Mr. Moncrieff died, in the sixty-seventh year of his age, the forty-second of his ministry, and the nineteenth of his professorship.

At a *pro re nata* meeting of the Anti-Burgher (or General Associate) Synod, held in February 1762, a successor was appointed, after a tribute to Professor Moncrieff had been ordered to be recorded. There was a strong and general wish that the Rev. Adam Gib should be promoted to the chair; for his powerful intellect, his stores of

learning, and his ability to express his ideas, views, and information in a clear and terse style, and with distinct and forcible elocution, were acknowledged by all his brethren, who knew, too, that his conscientiousness and zeal fitted him for all the responsibilities that attached to the distinction. But the Synod could not persuade him to accept the appointment. Perhaps he conceived that the many and arduous duties of the position which he then held in Edinburgh as the only minister of his Church in that city, and the minister, too, of a very large and influential congregation there, would prevent him from giving a sufficient share of his time and energies to the important functions of the theological professorship. He may have felt that, whatever a *country* minister (like Mr. Wilson of Perth and Mr. Moncrieff of Abernethy) might judge, he—as the minister of a very large *city* congregation—would find that after duly attending to his pastorate, he had far too little time and fresh strength left for his professorship. He probably erred in thinking that it required a far harder and more prolonged exertion of intellect, if not a higher order of intellect, to prepare discourses for a city audience than for a rural one ; at all events, whatever might be his reasons, he declined to acquiesce in the Synod's choice of himself as professor.

The appointment was then offered to and accepted by the Rev. William Moncrieff, minister of the Anti-Burgher congregation at Alloa, and second son of the late professor; and the Anti-Burgher Hall was removed from Abernethy to Alloa,—a change of locality which students who admired the picturesque might regret.

Though this third professor's term of office is much nearer our day than that of either of his predecessors; though it also extended to the length of twenty-four years; and though, both from this greater length of term and from the rapid extension of the Anti-Burgher branch of the Secession over the whole of Scotland, and into England and Ireland as well as America, a far larger number of students who became ministers had received their theological training from him, yet much less can be said of his mental characteristics, natural and acquired. These, probably, were less prominent and striking than in his father or in Mr. Wilson of Perth; certainly he had a less strongly marked individuality. What he was and what he did were not so boldly and so firmly stamped with his own image and its peculiar features as everything about *Culfargie* had been, whose nature was a glowing 'mint,' that melted, shaped, and impressed with his own likeness whatever passed into or through it.

The character-face of 'THE LION,' which had been given (appropriately, as friends believed) to his father, was never spoken of as descending to his son, who failed to inherit this likeness as well as the Culfargie estate. 'Mr. William' had in 1745, when a student of divinity, been carried off as a prisoner by the rebels ; but this was in consequence of his father's defiant demeanour and language to the party that, in the interest of the Pretender, plundered *Culfargie* of cattle and provisions, after being refused friendly recruits and refreshments. The father rebuked, denounced, and warned the Highlanders and their officers with all the freedom which he would have shown in dealing with his students or members of the Abernethy congregation ; and the savage soldiers seem to have been so overawed by the lion-like old minister, that they refrained from laying hands upon him or offering him any personal rudeness. But his more passive and less demonstrative son—'Mr. William'—along with cattle and provisions from Culfargie, they carried off, threatening to put the prisoner to death—not if he tried to escape (for this they did not expect) — but if the parishioners, infuriated at the injury done to the family and property of the laird and the minister, attempted a rescue.

There are few or no materials still extant from which any critical insight might enable readers to form a judgment as to the order of intellect, the peculiar faculties, the scholarship, and the power to teach, which Mr. William Moncrieff possessed. He, indeed, dealt with the public through the press; but it was chiefly in editing and publishing a collection of his father's works. All his own writings that appeared were a single pamphlet on Covenanting, and a single sermon which he had preached as moderator of his Synod!

This, however, can be confidently affirmed, that throughout the long course of his professorship, he was much and widely respected for the methodical yet earnest way in which he discharged his duties, and for the clearly-defined and sound views of theology—both in outlines and in details—which he communicated. Long after his death, the many ministers who had been trained in the Hall at Alloa cherished for his labours and merits a regard and a gratitude, and of his character and intercourse with themselves a memory, which, though free from enthusiasm, had a genuine tenderness.

There were, from the very beginning of his occupancy of the Theological Chair, much larger accessions of new students than during his father's

term, though in the midst of 'years of plenty' there often occurred 'years of famine.' This fluctuation in the case of first-year students would doubtless be at the time of easy explanation ; but now, on looking back over the distance of a century, it seems unaccountable. In 1762—the Professor's first session—there were *eight* new students ; but in the next three sessions there was an annual average of *four*. In 1766 there were only *two* ; but in the next year the number made the high leap to *nineteen*. In 1768 there were *three* ; in 1772 there were *thirteen* ; but in the year immediately following there were only *two*. In 1776 there were *eleven* ; in 1777 there were *fifteen* ; but in the next session the number had fallen to *four*.

The length of the Hall session was, either at the beginning or at a later period of Mr. W. Moncrieff's professorship, shortened from three months to nine weeks ; and even this contracted term was not rigidly stationary, for it was enacted by the Synod that nothing less than a *six weeks'* attendance would be sustained as a session, implying that there might be cases in which the presence of a student for only six weeks would be reckoned his attendance for a full session, though it was exactly *half* of what a session was in the days of Mr. Wilson of Perth and Mr. Alexander Moncrieff of Abernethy.

Still it was found that this rather sweeping reduction of the session failed to secure regularity of attendance on the part of not a few of the students. The examining committee, when reporting about the entrance qualifications of new students and the progress of old students, complained to the Synod that 'the attendance of the students upon the lectures of Professor Moncrieff was not so regular as it ought to be;' and the Synod issued regulations for ensuring a full and punctual attendance. Some of these have an odd mixture of bribes and threats,—as when it was declared that 'in taking young men on trials for licence,' those students who had been most exemplary for the regularity of their Hall attendance should have the preference and the precedence—*that is*, they should get the earliest start as 'probationers'—for getting into vacant congregations! The preference or precedence might not be quite consistent with 'Presbyterial parity;' still it did both promise and pay 'compound interest' to the student who had been a model of regularity. For not missing the Hall lectures for a few minutes each day or a few days each week, he might receive a month, if not two months', start to run through the vacancies, and have the first chance of being chosen by some of the best congregations!



Punctuality at the Divinity Hall might thus be rewarded by an early settlement in the most eligible of the vacant pastoral charges. On the contrary, the student against whom irregular attendance at the Hall could be alleged, might look out for difficulties and delays in the way of his being licensed to preach and to go into vacancies. Nay, it was enjoined that when he applied to undergo his trials for licence, he must produce an attestation from the Professor that he had been duly present at the meetings of the Divinity class during each of the five sessions that formed the theological course.

Church Courts of that day maintained a far stricter, yet more extensive, authority over students and probationers than they now care to do. They not only appointed preachers to spheres of labour in Ireland, and even in America, but they insisted on the appointments being accepted; and from preachers who refused, their licence was withdrawn.

During Mr. William Moncrieff's professorship, it was judged necessary to condemn, in students and preachers, tendencies to what was somewhat vaguely called 'an affectation of literary and philosophical refinement,' which was said to have widely seized upon the preaching of the Established Church,—to the injury not only of evan-

gelical doctrine, but even, too, of such plain lessons on practical morality as the Moderates had been wont to give. That 'affectation' extended from the matter and style to the very delivery or reading of the sermons, for the preachers aimed at unique superfineness; and this was fitly completed and girdled by jewelled rings on the fingers which tossed forth the pretty conceits and the sparkling fancies of the new pulpit eloquence. The pronunciation was such as had never before been heard in Scotland; still it would not have escaped from being reckoned a greater novelty in England, though it was meant to be the purest English! The pronunciation of Whitefield had been greatly liked by all classes in his Scottish audiences, though we cannot imagine that any of his northern hearers would have been thrown, like David Garrick, into a fit of weeping by his exquisite articulation of the word *Mesopotamia*; but if our common people had heard one of the new and superfine preachers of that day attempting to conjure pathetically with that word by giving it *his* English pronunciation, they would have stared aghast, as if a hippopotamus had spoken!

If there had been room here to give specimens of the sermons that were condemned by the Anti-Burgher Synod,—specimens of the ideas and specu-

lations that were substituted for the truths and claims of Christianity, and specimens of the so-called literary style in which the pseudo-philosophical thinking was expressed,—it would have been seen that Seceders waged no war against either eloquent or original preaching, if this really did exhibit fully and forcibly the essential truths of the Gospel,—if, in short, it really were *preaching*! If it did not set forth those evangelic truths,—if, instead, it dealt with other and wholly different subjects,—it might still be both eloquent and original; but it would not be *preaching* at all.

What, however, came under the censure of the Seceders—while often it had little or nothing of evangelical truth, and was thus unworthy to be called preaching—never had either eloquence or originality. In matter it was commonplace and flimsy, and its style either glared with gaudy or glittered with pretty rhetoric.

Yet, what that is novel will not find imitators? A month or two before the death of the elder Professor Moncrieff in 1761, the Anti-Burgher Synod 'cautioned those under their inspection who may be pointing towards public work in the Church, against an affected pedantry of style and pronunciation, and politeness of expression in delivering the truths of the gospel, as being an

using the enticing words of man's wisdom, and inconsistent with that gravity that the weight of the matter of the gospel requires ; and as proceeding from an affectation to accommodate the gospel in point of style, which, if not prevented, may at length issue in attempts to accommodate it also in point of matter, to the corrupted taste of a carnal generation ; and that they recommend to all the ministers of this Synod to show a suitable pattern in this matter, in endeavouring in their public ministrations, by the manifestation of the truth in plainness and gravity, to recommend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And at the same time, that the Synod give caution against all such meanness and impropriety of language as hath a tendency to bring discredit upon the gospel ; as also against using technical, philosophical, and learned terms that are not commonly understood.'

From the *terms* of this caution, it might be inferred that the Synod condemned a literary style—a style fresh and glowing, vigorous and sinewy, graceful and melodious ; and, unquestionably, there were few among the members of the Seceding Synod, just as there were few among the members of the General Assembly, who did make use of this literary style, though it would neither have injured

nor obscured the purest evangelical preaching. Some years later, their own Professor Bruce of Whitburn, and Dr. Thomas M’Crie of Edinburgh, did regularly and admirably employ that style; and the Synod, if privileged to listen to M’Crie’s noble sermon on ‘The Thief on the Cross,’ would surely not have regarded such preaching as within the sweep of their censure of 1761! The evangelical worth of the Rev. Thomas Boston, as a preacher and an author, would not have been harmed or hidden if he had commanded the literary style of *Jupiter* Carlyle of Inveresk.

We must, then, restrict the Synod’s ‘caution’ to the ‘affectation’ of such a style; and it was soon manifest that the warning was not uncalled for; and that, unscathed by it, this and other ‘affectations’ showed themselves here and there. Students were the offenders. We are not told if, in their Divinity Hall discourses and exercises, suspicious tendencies had appeared. Some of them had been allowed an opportunity of figuring as authors in the *Royal Magazine*,—an opportunity which was then a thousand times more rare than it now is, when authorship is nearly co-extensive with penmanship. Their contributions were commonplace notions in pompous and inflated language. Professor, Presbytery, and Synod must have been

strongly moved in contempt to pass the silly effusions unnoticed, and to allow the young men to walk about believing that they had won a splendid literary reputation. The following specimen-sentence is taken from a paper that brought its author under ecclesiastical discipline:—

‘The man of a liberal and polite education stands the fairest way for gaining the applause of his indulgent Author, who formed him in the womb, and infused into his tender frame the principles of wisdom and humanity, of justice and benevolence: and thence he will reckon it his highest honour to divest himself of all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil-speaking, and malice, and to dress himself in the lovely garments of charity and universal benevolence. By this kind of education our happiness will be proportional to our acquisitions.’

Obviously, in his lofty eulogy of ‘the man of a liberal and polite education,’ this student-author was not guilty of any *self-praise*. The Synod and his professor would at once absolve him of *that*, if his vanity, occupying the place of his conscience, should have been secretly suggesting it. There was enough in the foregoing sentence to show the bad theology of the article, which represented Deity as ‘indulgent’ to and bestowing ‘applause’

upon mere accomplishments of mind and amiabilities of heart, irrespective of that faith in Christ and that repentance towards God which purify the nature, the character, and the life, and which, by giving him both a union and a resemblance to Jesus Christ, render a man truly pleasing to his 'indulgent Author.' Equally bad were the grammar and the rhetoric. To '*stand the fairest way*' is such a ludicrous blunder of a phrase as might have been furnished by a foreigner just beginning to learn the English language; and the rhetorical style in which the 'man of liberal and polite education' strips and dresses himself so that he might step forth 'in the lovely garments of charity and universal benevolence,' was too puerile for criticism.

All the discipline which this case called for should have been outside both Presbytery and Synod. It would have been enough for the student to be 'spoken to' by his minister or professor about his theological offence in substituting a 'polite education' for Christianity, as the means appointed to men for securing the favour of God and their own happiness; and also about his many grievous, yet ludicrous, literary faults and defects. Attached to the gentle rebuke should have been a brief but decided hint that, in spite of all temptations, he ought to refrain from authorship—pro-

bably for the whole of his life, but certainly for the present, and until he had got something specially new and important to say to readers, and until he had acquired such a knowledge of English grammar and skill in composition as would enable him to say it decently. The professor might have added—from his own observation, and also from his own experience—that many excellent ministers daily see their large volumes of manuscript sermons accumulating on the library shelf; and while they feel that these contain the produce of the long-continued and devoted intellectual efforts of their lifetime, they have subdued the wish that any of those thousands of discourses should pass into print, and escape the fate which awaits the collection of being unread by a single eye; and they are quite resigned to the prospect of the whole collection being summarily destroyed, or kept back—through the affection of children—for a generation from perishing piecemeal as waste paper. Why then should a student, as soon as, after a few hours' or days' racking of his brain, he sees a few scores of manuscript pages, be impatiently ambitious to have these published to the world,—lest otherwise his labour should have been in vain, and the world be defrauded of an invaluable treasure?



Something like this discipline would have been enough for the case in question. But the Presbytery and Synod levelled their heavy artillery against 'a butterfly.' The student (whose name was Laurence Wotherspoon), when dealt with by his Presbytery, was foolishly refractory; he declined to assume any penitential sackcloth, nor did he 'dress himself' in his own 'lovely garments of charity and universal benevolence.' His absurd demeanour before his ecclesiastical superiors was that of one who regarded them as meanly jealous of his 'genius,' and envious of the literary reputation which he had acquired by his essay on 'A Liberal and Polite Education.' But when he stood at the bar of the Synod he was in a humble mood, and after making a confession of the 'heresies' in his paper, and expressing contrition, he avowed himself ready to go gratefully through all the discipline which the court might appoint. He was rebuked at the Synod's bar, and placed under the 'lesser excommunication,' while it was remitted to the Presbytery to watch over him, with the view of ascertaining whether his penitence and his promised amendment were sincerely carried out. At next meeting of Synod, the Presbytery's report being favourable, and Wotherspoon repeating his expression of deep sorrow and his entire

acquiescence in the discipline through which he had passed, his sentence of suspension was removed. It may be doubted if the Synod—after the student's confession and contrition—might not have dispensed with excommunication, and simply have sent him back to some preliminary classes for his improvement in English grammar and composition.

Shortly after, another student of the other Divinity Hall—Andrew Marshall—who had contributed to the *Royal Magazine* (which seems to have valued juvenile contributions) an essay on 'Ambition,' which was still more objectionable; and as he refused to acknowledge that what he had written was erroneous, it was decided by the Synod that he should be 'rebuked, and debarred from the privileges of the Church.'

It was soon discovered that this 'philosophical mania'—as the tendency to ignore and to dispense with Christianity altogether was not very felicitously called—had originated with, or at least been strongly fostered by, the prelections of the young man who was recently teacher of the philosophical class in connection with the Anti-Burgher Divinity Hall. He had been labouring to make the Seceding philosophical class more dangerous to divinity students than the philosophical classes

in any of the Scottish Universities were at the time suspected to be. He, like his predecessors, had been appointed for the express design of guarding philosophy against all the anti-Christian principles that might be incorporated or associated with it ; but he took advantage of his position himself to do what he was expected to prevent others from doing. Instead of being a sentinel, he acted as an invader, and also gave admission to other enemies ; for he recommended to the students books that insidiously sapped the Christian religion.

This teacher was a Mr. Alexander Pirie, who, in conducting the class for some years, had so quietly instilled his views, that he had resigned the post, and passed through his trials for licence as a probationer, and by a plea of ill-health had evaded an appointment to some colonial sphere, before the Synod was furnished with any grounds for suspecting him. When at length the Synod obtained full and authentic details of the character of his philosophical instructions, he was summoned to its bar ; but not only was he impenitent—he was defiantly and insolently adhesive to the views which he had instilled. He was deprived of his licence. He then joined the Burgher Church, but soon, on being libelled for heresies, left that communion too, and signalized his flight from discipline by

pouring forth a volley of angry vituperation upon both branches of the Secession in a pamphlet. Mr. Alexander Pirie exactly reversed the procedure which his pupil Wotherspoon had ascribed to his 'man of liberal and polite education.' Mr. Pirie 'divested himself' of the 'lovely garments of charity and universal benevolence' (if *he* ever wore them), and he 'dressed himself' in 'all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil-speaking, and malice,' for the purpose of taking a cursing farewell of the Secession!

The Anti-Burgher Synod followed up those three cases of discipline by recommending all ministers who had students in their congregations to take special notice of them, 'particularly with regard to anything of modish affectation into which any of them may fall;' and when there were 'any appearances of this sort,' they were promptly to deal with the offender. Should he prove incorrigible, they were enjoined to take steps for having him brought before the Presbytery or the Synod. The Synod also declared that 'they would no longer countenance those students of divinity who should be found giving themselves up to such affectations.'

The Synod's vigorous intervention seems to have been effective in preventing both the further spreading and the longer existence of this ten-

dency in the Divinity Hall to literary and philosophical affectation.

From a statement made by the Rev. Dr. A. Pringle of Perth, who had been a student at Alloa, we learn that the professor gave four lectures each week ; that once or twice a week theological difficulties were presented to the students to be explained ; that the meeting on Saturday was devoted to the hearing of a lecture on a chapter of the Confession of Faith ; that on the delivery of discourses, or the reading of exercises by students, their companions were requested to offer critical remarks ; and that the system of Turretine, in addition to the *Medulla* of Mark, was expected to be mastered by the students.

In the beginning of August 1786, Mr. Moncrieff died, having held the professorship for twenty-four years. He was distinguished more perhaps for his training than for his teaching faculties ; and from the Hall at Alloa there issued many young men whom he had admirably equipped for the ministry.

At a meeting of the Synod in September, the Rev. Archibald Bruce of Whitburn was appointed Mr. Moncrieff's successor in the Theological Chair ; and the Hall met at Whitburn—the scene of the new professor's pastorate.

Mr. William Moncrieff had, like his father, declined to take any salary for the performance of his duties as a professor; but the Synod, in acknowledgment of his unpaid though valuable services, decided that £20 a year should be given for the benefit of his younger children. The Synod began also to be ashamed that this professorial office, which was admittedly of paramount importance, should be allowed to exist as entirely without remuneration as if it had been a mere sinecure, and determined that its new occupant must consent to receive £50 annually. Mr. Bruce was unwilling to be the first professor, in connection with the Secession, who was *paid* for his teaching of divinity, and would have preferred to render his services 'without money and without price;' but the Synod had resolved to put an end to such examples of *unnecessary* generosity and self-sacrifice on the part of the theological teacher, and did succeed in overcoming Professor Bruce's sentimental scruples. Though, however, the shame of permitting the professor to be *unpaid* was effaced, might there not be ground for the milder reproach that he was *underpaid*?

Still (apart from the consideration that *theological* labour has other than *pecuniary* remuneration), the sum of £50 for the Hall term, in

supplement to the ministerial stipend, was, a hundred years ago, a not inadequate payment from a young, small, and rather poor Church, to a professor who was not necessitated, and could scarcely be inclined, to buy costly books, and to incur any more serious expense than for the entertainment of his students at tea.

Mr. Bruce was, at the time of his appointment, exactly forty years of age, having been born in 1746, near Denny (in the county of Stirling). The circumstances of his parents enabled him to receive the most thorough education which Scotland could then provide; and he had faculties, dispositions, and habits that took the utmost advantage of it. His nature was quickly receptive, and all that he acquired was at once methodized and assimilated to his mental constitution. He attended the Glasgow University, where he devoted himself with zeal and distinguished success both to classical and to philosophical studies; and the culture which his proficiency in these gave, appeared in his style not less than in his thinking. Subsequently, in whatever he spoke and wrote, his style, unlike that of his clerical brethren both in the Secession and in the Church of Scotland, was, in an exquisite combination of elements and qualities, distinctively *literary*. Mr. Bruce, indeed, was the

first of the Anti-Burghers who attained to a literary style; and his style was rich and racy, fresh, and full of felicitous phraseology. His versatility of intellect, that had been enlivened by a free fancy which was only under the reins of a just judgment and a fine taste, was represented by language copious and varied, fluent and forcible, finely tinted and shaded. He had, however, one drawback which was always apparent in his academical lectures and pulpit discourses; he had a drawling, hesitating, and in all respects unattractive and unimpressive *utterance*, which acted as lameness—the lameness of a ‘club-foot,’ associated with beauty and vigour. His eloquence was grievously marred, both in its character and in its influence, by this vocal peculiarity; still those who were accustomed to hear him were fascinated by the thinking and the style, without the charm being weakened by the bad vocal medium. For almost all the functions of a Divinity Professor he had eminent qualifications. His prelections on the Christian system, on Biblical criticism, on Church history, and on pastoral duty, were admirable for their thoughts and illustrations; and they suggested or stimulated thought in his students. He had a remarkable faculty of critical insight; and students acquiesced in his estimates



of the sermons and exercises which they submitted, for he was incisive against faults, generous to merits, and in reference to both he was always genial and encouraging to the students. His intimate friend, the Rev. Dr. Thomas M'Crie, thus delineates his intellectual characteristics: 'He possessed talents of a superior order, which he had cultivated with unwearied industry. To an imagination which was lively and fertile, he united a sound and correct judgment. His reading, which was various and extensive, was conducted with such method, and so digested, that he could at any time command the use of it; and during a life devoted to study, he had amassed a stock of knowledge on all the branches of learning connected with his profession, extremely rare. . . . His piety, his erudition, his uncommon modesty and gentlemanly manners, gained him the esteem of all his acquaintance; and these qualities, added to the warm interest which he took in their literary and spiritual improvement, made him revered and beloved by his students.'

In the year of Mr. Bruce's appointment to the Theological Chair (1786), there was published a treatise by a Church of Scotland minister—Dr. W. M'Gill of Ayr, to whom our great national poet has given a fame that, in spite of the poet's

sympathy with the Doctor's views and party, was and ever will be mere notoriety. In his *Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ*, the Ayr divine developed and defended what, without either mixture or concealment, was pure and ripe Socinianism. The promptitude and decision with which the Anti-Burgher Presbytery and Synod set themselves to crush heresies in the bud, and to pull up the weeds of minor errors, contrast with the tolerance, indifference, and laxity of discipline which the Church Courts of the Establishment displayed towards the capital offences of Dr. M'Gill, who denied the divinity of Christ, and the atoning design and nature of His death. The book had been in circulation for three years before ecclesiastical hands were mildly laid upon the author; and when he was apprehended and taken to the bar of Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly, a worse than equivocal apology for having been led into '*apparent* error,' not only satisfied, but gladdened the most orthodox among his brethren; and while a few of these, discontented with the insufficiency both of the confession and of the retraction of unsound doctrine, were desirous that further and severer discipline should be exercised, the great majority, as represented by the General Assembly, decided that

those prosecutors of the heretic were disqualified on a ludicrously trivial ground from being the champions of orthodoxy against Dr. M'Gill—the pattern of ‘honest men’ in Ayr—viz., *they did not belong to the parish!* This reminds us of the old story, that on the occasion of a deeply pathetic sermon being preached in a country parish, all began to weep except one man, who excused his insensibility by saying that he belonged to a different parish. To have rendered full *satirical* justice to the M'Gill case, prose rather than poetry should have been resorted to. In general, sarcasm against a public man or party is more or less spoiled by rhyme. A stanza may be too capacious for the poisonous essence inserted, and then the poison must be diluted by such words or lines as are mere expletives, and its deadly efficacy is weakened; or a stanza may be too small, and then a quantity of the poison is lost, and the dose administered proves too slight. The peculiar advantages which versical satire claims, may all be comprised in *alliteration*; and alliteration surely is not such a pre-eminent glory in rhetoric as to justify or reward important sacrifices in the sense. For the sharp sound, who would give up the smart meaning? For the mere crack of the whip, who, except the trembling victim, would part with the knotted lash?

But Burns' satirical treatment of the M'Gill case not only had the disadvantage of being in verse; it perversely (though for the poet not inconsistently) took the M'Gill side, and poured out all its ridicule and invective upon the supporters of evangelical truth.

The poet who had celebrated the 'Cottar's Saturday Night,' and many other scenes from which 'old Scotia's grandeur springs,' stooped occasionally to be the 'Laureate' of Ayrshire Moderatism; and in the present instance his partisanship was inspired by his friendly relations to the lawyer who had the management of the M'Gill case in the different Church Courts.

The Anti-Burgher Synod 'testified' emphatically both against Dr. M'Gill's views, and against the refusal of his Church to restrain or even to censure the heretic. Professor Bruce, too, who was ever on the alert to enlighten or to warn the public on questions of immediate interest, did not stand aloof or act as a mere spectator. His tendencies to wit, which were neither repressed nor always regulated by severe taste, had never affected the earnestness of his belief in or of his zeal for Christian truth. In his twenty-eighth year he had published *The Kirkiad*, a satirical representation of the Church of Scotland in recent eras of

degeneracy ; but though lively, its merit was not only irregular, but of a rather low level, and it may be classed with the metrical satire written on the same subject by Dr. Ralph Wardlaw when a Secession student. During the whole of his professorship he kept not merely his students, but the public, enlightened and warned on the various theological novelties and ecclesiastical questions of the day ; but along with discussions which were often remarkably vigorous and acute, as well as relevant, he was wont to introduce into each performance disquisitions full of learned research on collateral topics ; so that what should and would have been an effective pamphlet, became a lumbering treatise, which, when it did quit the bookseller's shelves, passed too soon to the shelves of readers. A literary man, who is *almost a poet*, will have developed the faculty of writing excellent prose ; and to the long list of men exemplifying the truth of this observation, Mr. Bruce may be added.

He was the first among either the Burgher or the Anti-Burgher Seceders who was regularly and by profession *an author*. Besides, he was an author who had a printing establishment for himself, and who had therefore no fear of his manuscripts being interfered with ; for whatever he wrote was, under his own eye, printed in every jot and tittle. His

friend Dr. Thomas M'Crie mentions, 'as a curious illustration of the zeal with which Mr. Bruce prosecuted his literary labours, that *he brought a printer* to Whitburn, and employed him exclusively for many years in printing his own publications.'

We have learned further, on good authority, that Professor Bruce himself often acted as *compositor* of his own 'copy'; and that, stepping into the room where his printer was busy, he spent hours in putting into type pages of his manuscript on any subject that intensely interested the author. There must have been singularly pleasant relations between the author and the printer; though the former, in taking—as he often did—the functions of the latter, would not have allowed to the printer a similar power of usurping the literary post. The printer was proud to see the minister, professor, and author take up the 'compositor's stick,' and transform his own manuscript into type; but, on the other hand, the Rev. Professor Arch. Bruce would have been somewhat astonished to behold the printer paying him back by undertaking the literary function, and furnishing by his own pen a supply of 'copy'!

To have completed the problem, Mr. Bruce should have been his own publisher as well as his own printer; and then the blame of failure for his

many literary enterprises would have been divided between himself and the world. Then nobody would have dreamed of *shooting* either the printer or the publisher as the author's enemy.

We can notice, in the Divinity Hall registers of Whitburn, that the class was considerably increased during Mr. Bruce's term of office ; and that the average of first-year students gradually rose, though it was still—but at longer intervals and in slighter degrees—exposed to variation and depression. The *new students*, added to those of the four previous sessions, formed a class large enough for the instruction and superintendence which a single professor could provide ; and it may be doubted if, within our Scottish Universities, divinity professors were called to preside over larger classes.

Professor Bruce was specially noted for the close and regular, yet thoroughly genial, intercourse which he maintained with his students. It was when he was in the Theological Chair that the students were most generally, and at the same time most wisely, led to criticize each other's discourses.

It has often been asked when this custom of students criticizing each other began. It was, we find, long anterior to the first meeting of the Divinity Hall at Perth in 1737. Wodrow, the historian of

the Church of Scotland, tells how his father, a divinity professor in Glasgow College, carried on the business of his class. After describing what assistance each student could obtain from the professor for the preparation of an exegetical exercise, the biographer says—

‘This and all other discourses were delivered without reading, to habituate scholars in that way, though their papers were allowed to lie before them in the delivery. Then the professor usually *asked the observes and censures of the students*, who were very exact and narrow in their remarks upon this and all other discourses before them, both as to matter, style, and manner of delivery. The deliverer was allowed to make his defences ; and the professor, in the last room, gave his observes, and ordinarily he had little left to do but give a general judgment.’ Mr. Wodrow was professor from 1692 to 1707.

We thus see that the practice of the students making free remarks upon each other’s discourses in the professor’s presence, was—by a whole generation and more—older than the rise of the Secession ; and that the Seceders omitted a very considerable and a most valuable portion of the old practice, viz. that which allowed the student-preacher to defend himself against all the strictures



of the student-critics, before the professor began to give forth his judgment.

The *Confession of Faith* had such an article about the power of the magistrate in religion as was sure to prove a rather heavy yoke upon the conscience of Seceders. It might have been expected that Professor Bruce would have sought a release for himself and for others ; but somehow he became sensitively and obstinately conservative of what was most galling both in theory and in practice, and would on no account consent to part with his fetter as a sacred denominational badge !

Through their strong desire for this conservation of the sinister aspect of a small point, Professor Bruce and Dr. M'Crie, with a few others, left the communion and ministry of the Church which they so much adorned, and formed themselves into the 'Constitutional Presbytery.' Bruce withdrew in 1803, when he had been professor in the Anti-Burgher Hall for seventeen years ; but he continued to teach the few students in connection with the sect of which he was one of the founders, down to his death in 1816, in the seventieth year of his age.

This question of the power of the magistrate in religion, which for several years at this time caused a fierce controversy in both branches of the Secession, was revived in more comprehensive bearings

and aspects by the great struggle that began in 1829 about 'Voluntaryism,' and has of late come again into discussion on still broader grounds and with a calmer spirit. The majority of our forefathers, who, both in the Burgher and in the Anti-Burgher Synods, adopted what were called *new light* principles, did really, though unconsciously, anticipate and reach forward to Voluntaryism; for their views about the magistrate involve the principle that the State should not 'establish and endow' the Church, or any church. 'See,' as Milton exclaims in reference to another example of anticipating broader truth, 'the ingenuity of truth, who, when she gets a free and willing hand, opens herself faster than the pace of method and discourse can overtake her!'

More or less, indeed, of an opening from end to end of the whole subject of a State Church, was made by those who dealt with the sophistry which, by introducing metaphysical subtleties of distinction into a plainly practical sphere, had complicated *the civil magistrate's relationship to Christianity*, and perplexed the simple question, What has *he*, not as a man and a Christian, but exclusively as a magistrate or secular ruler, to do *with and for* that religion? Were the question put regarding him as a man, a Christian, or a Church-member, the reply

would be—that he is bound by what he owes to God, and to his own highest and most enduring welfare, to receive and to practise for himself that religion, and to support and propagate it at home and abroad, with all his ‘heart, soul, mind, and strength ;’ and surely that gives him the amplest scope for proving his loyalty to the divine cause ! But if it were asked about him, exclusively *as a civil magistrate*, what he had to do with and for the promotion of Christianity, the answer—taking into account both what his magisterial functions and means, and what the character, aims, and laws of the Christian religion, *permitted*—would be, What CAN he do ? As a magistrate, he has been appointed to preserve life, property, and order in the community ; and to gain these ends, he has been invested with ‘the sword,’ an array of physical force, and the power of levying taxes ; and to the question, What can such an office, with physical force in all its agencies, and constrained taxes as forming its only treasury, do for the support and extension of Christianity ? Jesus Christ has Himself replied, ‘My kingdom is not of this world !’ The magistrate’s action is entirely authoritative and through force ; and all assistance of such a kind Christianity disowns, and will not in any form or degree accept. The only weapons which he bears

are the 'carnal weapons' which the gospel repudiates ; nor must he put forth his hand to the ark, even with the design of making it secure, for Uzzah's helping touch is not less interdicted than the hostile presence of Dagon ! Though the magistrate were a sincere Christian, and endowed with great sagacity and discretion, he must never, as a magistrate, interfere to promote and extend religion, by giving it either money out of the public funds or State titles and distinctions ; and surely, if *he* must stand aloof, ought those of his official brethren who are so many *Gallios* to the gospel—heedless of its blessings for themselves or for others—to wield their power on behalf of Christianity ?

Yet this conclusion, plainly stated, is revolting to not a few minds ; and they shrink from it as 'atheistic' in essence and in form, in the seed as well as in the fruit. The exclusion of the magistrate from the sphere of religion is held to involve nothing less than the expulsion of God from the secular sphere !—as if to prevent 'Cæsar' from profanely thrusting his authority into the sacred domain where God alone is ruler and judge, were to shut out the Divine Being from 'Cæsar's' empire, and to banish His providence from all the places that are amenable to the government of human potentates ! Is not this really equivalent

to the declaration that, unless you concede to *Cæsar* some usurped authority within the peculiar kingdom of God, you will dethrone God as 'King of kings and Lord of lords,' ruling and overruling throughout His entire creation?

'Have we not been told,' exclaim those who are shocked by the announcement about the magistrate's non-interference with Christianity, 'that a Christian must with all his powers and influence glorify his Master and promote his Master's cause; and consequently that, when he is a magistrate, he must exercise the functions of his office, not merely for the preservation of life, property, and order, but for the advancement of Christianity?'

We admit that he should carry his Christianity with him into every sphere of duty, and that his religion should furnish him with stronger obligations and motives for performing his *proper* functions as a magistrate, and for righteously employing, upon its proper subjects and within its proper limits, the *force* with which he has been invested, the 'sword which he bears;' but to carry his Christianity into the sphere of his office is altogether different from carrying his secular authority into the sphere of Christianity! He should be a *Christian magistrate*; but this is widely different from his being a *magisterial Christian*!

## 138 *The United Presbyterian Divinity Hall.*

For three years after Mr. Bruce's withdrawal, the Anti-Burgher (or General Associate) Synod delayed to appoint his successor in the Theological Chair—perhaps in the expectation that he himself would return to it. But, as generally happens in such cases, the point of difference, which he had always magnified when he refused to consider it as a 'matter for mutual forbearance,' became enormously exaggerated as he brooded over it in his isolated state; and it broadened and elevated itself so as to be, in his view, the worthy foundation for a separate Church!

During those three years, the students, having no professor, were instructed by the Presbyteries to which they severally belonged, and especially by the ministers of whose congregations they were members. In place of the professorial lectures, there were standard works on theology which each student was enjoined to read, and upon which he was strictly examined; while the 'full tale,' both of Presbyterial and of Hall exercises and discourses, was rigorously exacted from him, and his acquaintance with the original languages of Scripture, and with particular eras of Church history, was tested with greater severity than had been usual with professors. Both his minister and his Presbytery spent much time and attention in pro-

moting and stimulating his progress, so that he might sustain as slight an injury as possible through the vacancy in the professorship. It has not been recorded whether the students, when they became ministers, or their congregations, were ever made sensible of any loss having been inflicted through the substitution of Presbyterial for professorial training for three years.

In the first of these years (1804) there were no *new* students; but next year there were *seven*, and in the third year there were *eight*.

At length the Synod resolved on filling the vacant Theological Chair, and appointed the Rev. George Paxton, Anti-Burgher minister of Kilmaurs—then in the forty-fourth year of his age—a man of excellent abilities, superior classical and Biblical scholarship, and of unusually large and varied information; while, through his attractive utterance, and his easy and felicitous manner of communication, he had a full command over these qualifications, and gave his students the full advantage of them. The Synod wisely determined that, though his Kilmaurs congregation eagerly sought that they should continue to enjoy his ministerial services, Mr. Paxton's professorship should be at once wholly separated from his pastorate, though this was a small rural one; and that, resigning

the latter, he should remove to Edinburgh, where henceforth the Divinity Hall was to have its permanent seat. It had all along since 1737 been clearly shown that the Hall, though belonging to the Seceders, might lift an unabashed front beside the University classes, and the best educational institutes of the learned capital !

The Synod acted upon the conviction that the two offices, the pastoral and the professorial, were individually far too difficult and important to be held together by one man ; and that if he did not partly neglect either one or both of them, then the due discharge of the duties of both would seriously injure the robustest physical frame and shorten the soundest life. Warnings to this effect had, in the history of the Hall, been early and repeatedly given. The first professor, Mr. Wilson of Perth, endowed as he was with rare physical vigour and elasticity, had died prematurely, the pressure of his many intellectual toils breaking him down ; and none of his successors had yet been allowed to attain to an age when their resignation could either be expected or desired.

The Synod, perhaps, had its resolution to prevent the two offices from being conjoined again, either suggested or strengthened by the circumstance that Mr. Paxton was of a rather delicate constitu-



tion, and that already he had occasionally succumbed to the labours of a rural ministry. He had been ordained in 1789 over 'the United Congregations of Kilmaurs and Stewarton;' but in 1795 the state of his health compelled him to give up his charge of Stewarton, and to confine his labours to Kilmaurs. In 1805 he had for a time been laid aside from duty. To have appointed the man who staggered under the burden of a single office to bear, in addition, what was imposed by another and an equally arduous office, would have been cruel to the professor-elect, and delusive to the hopes of the Church.

In order that a professor may duly teach and train young men for the ministry, it may be desirable that he should previously have been a minister; but to insist upon him, when made a theological professor, still continuing to be a pastor, would secure no additional good, while it would drive him to an oppressive amount of labour, with but indifferent results. Between the two offices, he is so much hurried that he lacks time and strength for the functions of either.

In the first session of Mr. Paxton's professorship, 1807, there were *nine* first-year students; but in a few years the number rose to an average of fourteen; and in 1819, the year before the union of

the Burghers and the Anti-Burghers, it was as high as twenty-eight.

During this session the class must have been a very large one, as it consisted of the students of the previous four years, in addition to the twenty-eight who had just entered the Hall—the *curriculum* being five sessions.

Like his predecessor, Mr. Paxton expressed his thoughts in an easy, varied, and occasionally felicitous style, the time and care which he had expended on the writing of rather poor poetry qualifying him to write decidedly good prose ; and this he—unlike Mr. Bruce—did not mar by his manner of reading or delivery. His utterance, whilst free from drawling, did not, in going to the opposite extreme of singular rapidity, become at all confused ; for he articulated each syllable with clean-cut distinctness, and he pointed all the clauses of a sentence—through which his voice flew rather than ran—with amazing precision, and gave them a due variety of inflexions, which passed into a melodious cadence.

It was only in 1834 that he received from St. Andrews University the degree of D.D., though, in farther describing what he was and did in the Anti-Burgher Divinity Hall, we shall suppose him already crowned with the well-merited and

cautiously-bestowed honour, and speak of him as Dr. Paxton. He and his friend Thomas M'Crie could openly wear the title, without tempting the bitterest enemy of the Secession to allege that it had been given as 'alms.' In those days, the Universities of the north, while liberal in the granting of this degree to the Established clergy, had a close hand for Seceding theologians of acknowledged superiority in talents and learning; but better was this scanty justice than indiscriminate generosity—especially when American colleges of all sorts and sizes join with our own Universities in showering degrees upon Scotland, until they are nearly co-extensive with *Reverends*.

In carrying on the work of the Divinity Hall at Edinburgh, Dr. Paxton had daily two meetings with his students—except on Saturday, when they met once for devotional services, and for essay-reading and general conversation on some practical question of religion. The first meeting each day was early in the forenoon, when the professor lectured on Mark's *Medulla*, which still continued to be the text-book of systematic theology,—the professor's lectures on this book stretching over the whole course of five sessions, and going regularly through the doctrines as arranged by the Dutch divine. This hour on Mondays was occupied with

an exegetical lecture on some difficult passage of Scripture, along with readings by the students in the Greek New Testament, and examinations to test the proficiency of the class in the language. The second meeting each day was of much greater length, and had more miscellaneous engagements. Its main and most regular business was the hearing of discourses and exercises by students; after which criticism was invited from the class, to be summed up, as well as rectified, by the professor's judgment. Dr. Paxton also then examined on his morning's lecture. He gave a lengthy, and—as it always proved—a favourite course of lectures on 'the productions, manners and customs of the East,' as illustrative of the Bible. The substance of these has been given in his excellent work, *Illustrations of the Holy Scriptures*, which still maintains the high popularity which was accorded on its first appearance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The late Rev. Dr. James M'Crie, minister of the United Presbyterian congregation at Old Meldrum,—a man of uncommonly massive yet elastic and energetic intellect, great and varied erudition, and of the vast and minute information which his acquaintance with the modern literatures of various nations in their own languages could supply,—had for many years been engaged on a work which was and is a *desideratum* in Biblical Literature. It was to be such an elucidation of the arts and sciences, the plants, animals, buildings, etc. etc., mentioned in the Bible, as the best

One novelty the professor introduced ; he gave texts on which the students were asked to construct a ‘skeleton’ discourse—the bare anatomy, without the ‘flesh and blood’ covering of reasoning and sentiment, and without the rhetorical dressing of illustration and a polished style. This exercise—done *extempore*—must have been profitable, though Scottish preachers have in general thought too much about a clever arrangement of *firstlies* and *secondlies*, of ‘heads’ and ‘particulars,’ and too little about the fresh ideas and sentiments that should be contained under such divisions. Better to have life, motion, and action in an irregularly or defectively articulated skeleton, than to have a thousand perfect specimens—yet devoid of

books of travel and exploration that have been published in England, France, and Germany down to the present day could help to offer. The Doctor had completed the arduous undertaking ; the manuscript was ready, and he was also ready at once to meet the heavy expenses of issuing a work in three or four large volumes, that would not, in his lifetime, refund the large sums expended on its publication. He was an Ayrshire ‘laird’ as well as a Seceding minister ; and he was ready to devote his fortune, as well as his talents and learning, to the illustration of the Bible. We have, however, seen no announcement of this important work as forthcoming. This, surely, can merely be a *delay*, not a *suppression* of the work on which Dr. M’Crie’s admirable energies were concentrated for a large portion of his life, and for which the money was provided by the author out of means of which he had the entire disposal. If the work fail to make an early appearance, the Doctor’s heirs and executors should explain the *why* and the *wherefore*.

vitality. The 'skeleton' discourses that have been published are numerous enough to fill Ezekiel's 'valley of dry bones;' but one of Chalmers' discourses, though made up of mere fragments of a skeleton—often, indeed, nothing more than an arm—is yet animated and nerved by his genius with such prodigious power, that in its influence upon an audience it can operate more mightily than the whole army of skeletons!

To make up for the few and brief opportunities that could be found during the Hall session (which had now been changed from spring to autumn, and reduced from twelve to eight weeks' duration) for the reading of the Old Testament in its original language, and for testing and improving the students' acquaintance with Hebrew, the professor had a winter class, in which this and other studies were pursued; though, unfortunately, the students who resided in distant localities could not take advantage of this supplement to their means of instruction. Students seem, in general, to need the presence of a master, and of some fellow-disciples, to act as a stimulus to them when seeking to learn Hebrew, though they may have been their own tutors in acquiring a mastery over the language and literature of Greece or Rome, of France or Germany. They cannot get beyond the

Hebrew alphabet unless they have a teacher to spur them on, and other pupils to encourage them.

Dr. Paxton was expected by the Synod to devote all his time and strength to the teaching and training of those young men who aspired to the ministerial office; and he showed himself eager to assist in their University studies those who had not yet entered the Divinity Hall, while his principal labours were connected with the instruction of divinity students, who were his proper charge.

Like Mr. Bruce, he won and ever retained the admiration and love of pupils; and certainly the Anti-Burgher Hall, if it had then been under the professorship of less gifted, less accomplished, and less genial men than Paxton and Bruce, would have been thrown completely into the shade by the renown which encircled the Burgher Divinity Hall, as at that time taught at Selkirk by Dr. George Lawson, who had a unique assemblage of the rarest mental and moral qualities, and who would have seemed to be a much greater man if his intellectual faculties had been less finely balanced and harmonized, and if his greatness had not looked diminished beside his remarkable goodness, and been made to stoop down to his genuine humility. To have sustained a not inglorious

rivalry with such a teacher of theology is high praise for Bruce and Paxton, even when the love and admiration which these had gained lacked the intensity of similar sentiments cherished for Lawson by his pupils.

Down to the year of the union between the Burghers and Anti-Burghers (1820), the Divinity Hall of the latter, under Professor Paxton, was attended by large and steadily increasing numbers; yet from that Hall in its most flourishing condition, when there was, too, a sure prospect of an unprecedented accession to its numbers and strength through its union with the sister seminary, he withdrew, because—differing from the vast majority of his Anti-Burgher brethren, not less than from the vast majority of his Burgher neighbours—he cherished some exceedingly small, but morbidly exaggerated and wholly insurmountable, objections to the union of the two Churches.

Yet that union was a consummation far too justifiable, necessary, and blessed to permit of its being abandoned, or even delayed, for the sake of retaining Professor Paxton's company and countenance. His isolation could not but cause his brethren deep regret; but if he would not go forward with them, they could not remain behind along with him. The union was too great and too



safe an event to be seriously injured by losing the presence and the services of Professor Paxton ; just as the 'New Light' principles of 1803, about the power of the magistrate, maintained by the Anti-Burgher Synod, could bear the sacrifice involved in parting company with two such brethren as Professor Bruce and Dr. Thomas M'Crie.

Now that, in tracing the history of the Anti-Burgher Divinity Hall from the 'breach' in 1747, we have reached the time of the union,—the 'healing of the breach' in 1820,—we, rejoicing that the alienation which had been kept up for more than seventy years has been exchanged for closest amity, return to the date of the 'breach,' to trace the history of the Burgher Divinity Hall down to the happy union period.

We may here mention that, immediately before the rupture of 1747, the Secession consisted of forty-five congregations, eight of which happened to be vacant, and 'six had only three ministers among them.' When the separation occurred, twenty-six of these congregations adhered to the Anti-Burgher party, and nineteen to the Burgher. The former had twenty-two ministers, and the latter only twelve. We shall afterwards find that though the Anti-Burgher party continued for thirty years to grow in the number of its congrega-

tions more rapidly than the Burgher, yet throughout the next forty years the Burgher party, by large and regular strides of advance, came to be abreast of its rival, and in 1820 was considerably ahead. From the 'breach' in 1747 to the union in 1820, 155 congregations had been added to the Burghers, and 125 to the Anti-Burghers. If to the sum of these two lists of *new* congregations we add the 45 congregations that had been formed before 1747, there will be 325 as the full numerical strength of the Secession in 1820—325 congregations that had grown out of the *four* that seceded in 1733.

The Seceders were not restrained from going forward on the call of duty by the prospect of losing some of their ablest men; and for the Seceders of the first quarter of this century to leave behind them Thomas M'Crie, and Bruce, and Paxton, was an incomparably harder sacrifice than it could have been for the Free Church of 1870—when prosecuting union with the United Presbyterian Church—to break the brotherhood with the Anti-Unionist, Dr. Begg. The loss of a Candlish, *and* a Buchanan, *and* a Guthrie, *and* a Rainy, would have had a closer resemblance to the loss which the early Seceders sustained; yet the Free Church was deterred from carrying out the union by the more fractional and insignificant calamity.

## CHAPTER IV.

1747-1820.

The BURGHER Divinity Hall, as taught by Ebenezer Erskine, James Fisher, John Swanston, John Brown, and George Lawson, at Stirling, Glasgow, Kinross, Haddington, and Selkirk  
—The union correspondence between the two Divinity Halls.

THE Burghers, holding that Seceders might take the Burgess oath, or at least that this question should be a 'matter of forbearance,' instead of being magnified and elevated into a term of communion, were anxious that they should be reconciled with the brethren who had separated. They refrained from whatever might cause new irritation, or even prolong and sanction the strife. They desired to be wholly silent and inactive in their isolated position, so that the alienated brethren might not be kept from calmly thinking over the case, and consenting to return to the ecclesiastical household which had been so sadly broken up. They for a time declined to answer petitions from various districts for supply of preaching. But too soon was it obvious that whatever they might do, or

might refrain from doing for the sake of peace and unity, the quarrel was to exist, and to become historical; the 'breach' was to be deepened and widened; there were to be two parties, and these were to be organized and equipped as Churches that were to keep aloof from each other within their own camps. The Burghers must therefore take measures for self-preservation.

They had been left without a theological professor, Mr. Moncrieff of Abernethy having adhered to the Anti-Burgher side. The 'Associate Burgher Synod,' which had been formed at a meeting in Stirling in the month of June 1747, was specially convened in September of the same year at Dunfermline, to decide on what should be done for the training of those students who then did, or who subsequently might, belong to their party.

There was a strong desire in the Synod that Ebenezer Erskine should undertake the duties of theological professor; but he felt that these—conjoined with his extremely onerous labours as minister of a very large congregation that was drawn from an extensive area of parishes—would be a burden too great for his advanced age and its fast growing infirmities; and his brethren could not but acknowledge the force of his objections. He had then completed his *sixty-seventh* year;

but hard and unrelaxed work, along with many shocks of grief from a succession of family bereavements, had prematurely weakened his constitution, and—though his commanding form was unbent, and his face and bearing were as noble as ever—had secretly undermined his strength, and afflicted him with the feebleness of ‘fourscore!’

There was a unanimous conviction among the ministers that the brother who in all respects had pre-eminent qualifications, and was, too, of such an age that the Hall might then, and for ten or twelve years longer, receive their full benefit, was Mr. James Fisher. He was in his fiftieth year; and his high talents, his learning, and his intellectual culture, all of which had for nearly twenty years been concentrated on theological and ecclesiastical studies, would be available for half a generation, unless he should be attacked by disease, which interrupts a career of twenty or thirty, as well as of fifty or sixty years!

The importance which was then attached by theological professors and their clerical brethren to the qualifications or disqualifications of age, is a conspicuous point. The same views were acted upon in military spheres, and commanders were young, or of middle age. But in recent wars, the leaders of European armies were venerable for age

and experience ; while in statesmanship, instead of a Premier of twenty-four, like Pitt, there was a Palmerston of eighty. Disraeli, who, when a young man, was wont to maintain the paradox that 'great achievements are only possible in youth, is now himself, in his present position, a falsification of his former theory.

Mr. Fisher, out of deference to the man who was his ecclesiastical leader and his father-in-law, was unwilling to accept the appointment to the vacant chair ; but it was finally agreed that Mr. Ebenezer Erskine should forthwith act as professor for a time, until he felt the burden too heavy ; and that Mr. Fisher should prepare for subsequently filling the post.

In the beginning of February of the following year, the Burgher Divinity Hall met at Stirling, to be instructed by Ebenezer Erskine. Three of the former students who should have been present during this, as the last session of their *curriculum*, had been licensed to preach a few months before, on account of the lack of preachers to supply vacant congregations. There were, however, four *new*, or first-year students ; and foremost among these was the laborious youth who afterwards was widely, and in other Churches besides his own, known as 'John Brown of Haddington'—where

he was minister of a Burgher congregation and also professor of the Burgher Divinity Hall, not to mention his having there produced many valuable books in exposition and illustration of the Scriptures, and in the fervid advocacy of Christian doctrine and duty. Mr. Erskine did not, perhaps, assume much either of the method or of the manner of a professor ; still, the privilege of listening to the mature wisdom and the rich experience of one who had not only been among the most commanding preachers of his country and generation, but had also been 'the Father' of the Secession, would be highly prized by the students, who long afterwards, when they were ministers, and beheld the Secession spreading over the country, would cherish the memory of that privilege with growing fondness. Their recollections of him and his contendings, as historical, would blend with their romantic and historical associations around Stirling, Stirling Castle, and the neighbouring field of Bannockburn.

He does not seem to have read any lectures to the class ; he was too old to have set himself to the preparation either of a course or of an occasional series ; and probably his instructions, and the results of his experience and observation, could be best communicated in a less formal style. To take the

students through a system of theology, he read from *Turretine*, and commented upon the leading doctrines. He excelled in examination, for in this he had carefully engaged during the whole of his pastorate ; and he skilfully elucidated doctrine, and tested the knowledge possessed by the students. In his critical remarks upon the Hall discourses, he must have given many valuable hints on preaching,—lessons from his own practice in an art of which he had been so great a master, except in a literary style, which he never seems to have acquired or cared to acquire. This defect, however, which *now* weakens the effect of his discourses when read, did not in the least mar their influence upon the multitudes that listened to their delivery ; and, indeed, there was quite as little of literary grace and power in the sermons of Whitefield as in those of Ebenezer Erskine.

Mr. Erskine soon felt that the professorship, conjoined with his ministerial work, pressed far too heavily upon him in his old age, and in his peculiar state of physical debility. He held the Theological Chair for only two sessions, resigning it in 1749. It was even necessary that his pastoral labours should be lightened ; and a colleague and successor to him in his Stirling charge was chosen. The venerable man died in 1754, at the age of seventy-four.



On 7th September 1749, the Rev. James Fisher, then of Glasgow (having been translated from his charge at Kinclaven in 1741), was, by a unanimous vote of the Synod, appointed to succeed his father-in-law in the Chair of Theology. It had formerly been plainly indicated to him that he would be called on to fill this post, and he had been encouraged to turn his thoughts and studies into preparation to discharge its duties most effectively. The work in which he was then and afterwards, along with Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, engaged, and of which by far the largest share fell to him—that of writing an ‘exposition of the Shorter Catechism’—would be of no small value to him in tracing the outlines and details of the theological system which he was destined to discuss in the Divinity Hall.

By a curious coincidence, a few days after his appointment to the professorship of the Burgher Hall, we find him concluding one of his keenest and most incisive controversial publications—an elaborate ‘Letter’ to those of the ‘Burgesses’ who had withdrawn from his large congregation, and were busy in ‘aspersing’ him for his mild views about the ‘oath.’ It was dignified and calm, though trenchant; there was no calling of nick-names, no scattering either of abuse or of insinua-

tion ; and in dealing with his opponents' allegations and arguments, these were not rudely struck at or violently slashed across—they were but touched ; yet the touch took the life out of them, and left them useless for any farther service to those who had employed them. It is an admirable piece of clean-cutting satire. Yet the newly-elected professor could not like this coincident task, though we have known of a clergyman in the first quarter of his honeymoon inditing a controversial pamphlet, marked, not by satire, but by personal virulence.

Mr. Fisher was the last, though certainly not the least, of the 'Four Fathers' of the Secession, who filled the Theological Chair. From his gifts and acquirements, his culture and taste, his studious habits and aptitude for teaching, we should not have been surprised if his brethren had fixed upon him in 1736 to be the first professor ; but he was the youngest of the band, and even if he had shown any eagerness for the distinction, he could reasonably be expected to wait for it behind his seniors. But probably it was his own modesty that suggested and urged the idea of giving a preference and precedence to his older brethren in succession.

In the character-faces of the prophet, which Mr. Wilson of Perth—as we have already more than once indicated—happily applied to himself and the

other 'Fathers' of Secession, Mr. Fisher received, what he would have been the last, even in a playful mood and in a moment of exhilaration, to claim, 'the face of an eagle.' Mr. Fisher has left too few publications (and these wholly of a controversial kind on ecclesiastical questions of a somewhat confined and fugitive interest) to permit us to judge if he had a bold and aspiring imagination, fitly represented by the 'eagle' soaring above the clouds, and rising *sunwards* with eye undazzled as well as with wing unwearied; though if he had, he must *then* have been the only 'intellectual eagle' in Scotland! We have no means of knowing how his soul dilated, rose, and kindled when on one of the sublime themes of Christianity; though 'a competent judge' declared that 'neither as to sentiment, composition, nor delivery had he ever heard Mr. Fisher's superior.'

But he had a quickness and keenness of perception, and a perspicacity of judgment, that might by a bold effort of poetic exaggeration be likened to the vision of an 'eagle;' while the force and speed with which in polemics he darted upon an opponent, and seized upon and mastered his arguments, might be said in a vague way to resemble the swoop of the eagle down upon his prey. We confess, however, that if any enthusiastic Seceder

were to demand that those four character-faces be regarded as exact portraits of the four Fathers of the Secession, historical sketching would become mere caricature. One exception, indeed, might and should be made, in the face ascribed to Ebenezer Erskine—for he, undeniably, had ‘the face of A MAN,’—and of a right noble and commanding man too! We are not ambitious to have *Seceder* types of ‘lions’ and ‘eagles,’ or even of ‘oxen;’ but *Seceder* ‘men’ are neither fabulous nor in any modern age unnecessary.

Mr. Fisher held the theological professorship for fifteen years, after which he resigned it on account of his advancing age and declining health. He ceased to be professor in 1764, when he was sixty-seven years of age; but his life and his ministerial usefulness were spared for eleven years longer.

Except for emphatic averments by his brethren and his pupils that he taught and trained most efficiently and faithfully, and the evidence furnished from the fact that he sent forth from his class many of the ablest and most accomplished ministers that ever appeared within the Secession; there is no special report about his Hall services. No information has come down to us about either his lectures or his examinations. We do not know what text-book he used, or if he used any text-

book. His professorial term occupied that middle era in the Hall history which is equally barren of growing news and of gleaned traditions, it being too old for the former and not old enough for the latter. The students' associations, too, around Glasgow as the seat of the Divinity Hall, cannot have been so pleasantly romantic, so socially interesting, and so vividly historical, as those that had been formed around Stirling, Abernethy, and Perth, or as those that were still to be formed around Kinross, Haddington, or Selkirk.

We turn to the Hall-registers for some figures about the *new* students who in different sessions joined Mr. Fisher's class. The effects of the 'breach' upon the Burgher party continued to show themselves throughout the whole term of his professorship.

On 1st February 1750, when the first session began, there were *five* new students ; next session, *five* ; in the following session, *four* ; in 1753, *no new students* ; and in 1764, the very last year of his term, there is the same blank report ; while in two intermediate sessions there were *two* new students ; in other two sessions only *one*, and in other two there were *three* ; but in 1757 the number rose to *twelve*—the highest figure reached during his professorship. If he began to be disheartened by the

low and varying state of the attendance of *first-year* students, he lived to see that his immediate successors were not privileged with much greater success.

On the resignation of Mr. Fisher, Mr. John Swanston, minister at Kinross, was appointed to the chair in May 1764; but his professorship was only a year longer than that of Ebenezer Erskine, though—unlike this veteran—he was suddenly cut off in the midst of his days and in the prime of his strength, he being only in his forty-sixth year, and naturally of a most vigorous constitution and an athletic frame.

Mr. Swanston was born in the parish of Stichel, on a farm near the village of Hume, almost under the shadow of Hume Castle, whence a magnificent view of the Merse could be obtained. Physically, he was a fine specimen of the Borderer. In spite of the dissuasions and remonstrances of his family and friends, his conscience compelled him to withdraw from the Established Church and join the Secession. After a full course of classical and philosophical instruction at Edinburgh University, he became a student of divinity in the Hall at Perth, under Mr. Wilson. He was licensed as a preacher in 1743, and after receiving many calls from vacant congregations in Ireland as well as in

Scotland, he was ordained at Kinross. He had been, and continued to be, a hard student; and those who knew him intimately ascribe to him 'invention,' as well as great sagacity and learning. All the elements were in him largely developed and finely harmonized,—the intellectual, the emotional, and the moral,—and they were enshrined within a large and powerful *physique*, which 'gave the world assurance of a man.' He was beloved, esteemed, and admired by all who came within the range of his manifestation and influence; and the remark made by some of his flock long after his death, 'he was like a god among us,' had a rather *heathenish* form and sound, which attested its cordiality and freedom from all hypocrisy.

To his students he was a genial companion and a sympathizing friend, not less than an earnest teacher and a faithful mentor; and this was strongly felt by poor Michael Bruce, though the young poet had a strange charm that induced the hardest and coldest natures to be frankly effusive to him. But Bruce gratefully and in astonishment confessed that he could feel, speak, and act in his professor's company as in the presence of a loving elder brother!

Mr. Swanston, during his brief professorship, seems to have followed the method of his old pro-

fessor, Mr. Wilson of Perth. The *Medulla* of Mark was his text-book ; but his own prelections upon the leading doctrines of the Dutch system were enriched from his studies of the old English theology.

In the first and third year of his occupancy of the chair there were *nine* new students ; and in the second there were *seven*. Among these seven (in the year 1766) was a youth whose face had the bright outlook of genius, but bore as unequivocally the marks of consumption. This was Michael Bruce, then in his twentieth year ; and if the promise of genius in his vividly expressive features was fulfilled in 'Lochleven' and other effusions of his muse, so, too, the destiny to an early grave that was foreshadowed by the fugitive flush on his wan and wasted countenance, was quickly realized, for in the summer of the next year he died. Death prematurely closed what would have been a glorious career ; but a more ruthless spoiler—under the guise not only of friendship for the youthful departed and of zeal for his fame, but also of sympathy and generosity for his sorrowing, indigent, and aged parents—sought to do, and only too well and too long succeeded in doing, an injury that was beyond the power of death ! Death, while snatching away the many pages that Bruce *might* have filled with



poetry, could not touch the few which he *had* written, and these remained as precious fruits of and testimonies to his genius. There was one piece—a short ode to ‘The Cuckoo’—which alone would have conferred a bright immortality upon the poet, surrounding his name and memory with ‘perpetual Spring.’ But far more cruel than death, John Logan, the *Reverend* John Logan, laid a sacrilegious and despoiling hand upon the few remains, after by deceit he had gained from Bruce’s simple father the privilege of guarding them; and by an act of literary larceny unparalleled for its heartlessness and baseness, he selected the most exquisite pieces, appropriated these to himself, to be praised then and throughout all the future as his own compositions, while he left some inferior pieces as rags to clothe the *stripped* reputation of the deceased young poet! He manifested his utter shamelessness by robbing his departed friend of the choicest treasure in the remains—the inimitable ode to which we have alluded; and as an aggravation of his crime in this and the other thefts from Bruce, he deliberately attempted to make it doubtful to the end of time whether some of the most exquisite of the poems were really Bruce’s or his own! By throwing into the collection of pieces which he published several trifles of

his own, and by destroying Bruce's original manuscript volume which the father had been induced to entrust into his hands, he hoped to establish such a confusion as would enable him to claim confidently the authorship of the finest pieces, and would also perplex posterity—if posterity should ever get into a suspicious mood about the Rev. John Logan's honesty in the peculiar method which he took to preserve the poetic fame of Michael Bruce. Even now, when nobody denies that Logan's conduct in the matter would have been unaccountable if it had not been proved to be largely dishonourable, there are some persons still so perplexed that they hesitate to exact from Logan the restoration of the 'Cuckoo' and other pieces to Bruce.

It should ever be remembered, as indicating the frankness, geniality, and quickly appreciative nature of Professor Swanston, that he became at once a bosom-friend to Michael Bruce—a first-year student; and that the latter, when in either a playful or a serious mood, could speak more freely to his professor than to any of his class-fellows.

These friends were not long divided by death. The professor was assisting at a Perth sacrament, when on the Sabbath evening he was seized with an inflammatory illness, which reached its crisis

too rapidly to permit his removal to his home at Kinross. In a few days he died at Perth, in the summer of 1767, when he was only in his forty-sixth year, and had conducted the Divinity Hall for three sessions. Michael Bruce was on his death-bed when he heard of his professor's unexpected decease ; and in three weeks he died.

There is a posthumous volume which contains several of Mr. Swanston's sermons — excellent specimens of the doctrine with which he instructed his Kinross flock ; but of the prelections which his students admired, not the smallest fragment is extant. The choicest, however, of all the treasures he left was a remarkable son—a youth endowed with rare gifts, and with the purest simplicity, sincerity, and amiability of nature. Of him Dr. Lawson was wont to say that he could not conceive Jonathan to have been more loving and more worthy of love than Andrew Swanston. Whether from a restlessness of intellect, fickleness of judgment, or nice scrupulosity of conscience, he went from his own Church to several other Churches in rapid succession, without abandoning any evangelical doctrine ; and on his death at an early age, Dr. Lawson exclaimed, '*Now* Andrew Swanston has got a Church to his mind!'—an *impromptu* remark so felicitous that it might have been the

result of a prolonged effort to make a striking utterance.

The Rev. John Brown, of Haddington, was chosen to fill the Theological Chair ; and even then it was evident—though not so decisively as at a later stage of his life—that from his peculiar talents, acquirements, and habits, the Synod had no better, no equal candidate for the post. When appointed (in 1767) he was in his forty-fifth year ; and he was professor for twenty years, discharging the duties vigorously and with universal confidence down to his death, in the sixty-seventh year of his age. He might have been elevated to the chair at the time of his receiving licence as a preacher—when he was about twenty-eight years old—for even then he had acquired a vast and varied stock of erudition, both sacred and profane, and mastered the leading modern languages, in addition to Latin, Greek, and Hebrew ; yet—except for two sessions' attendance at the Burgher Divinity Hall, and a single month's attendance for Latin at a parish school—he had taught himself all that he knew. He had never been at a University ; yet he possessed such an extensive and thorough acquaintance with the ancient languages, that common report in his neighbourhood traced that acquaintance to sorcery or the devil's tuition ; and at the

time of his application for admission into the Divinity Hall at Stirling, the idea of this familiarity with diabolic arts came forth with such full form and force, that Ralph Erskine had to sweep it away by the declaration, 'I think the lad has a sweet savour of Christ about him.'

Ralph Erskine could not have forgotten that his own bass fiddle and fiddling had once been supposed by his parishioners to be somehow under the devil's patronage, though in the days of King Saul musical instruments had the effect of frightening him and all his evil spirits; and he would conclude that Satan, if specially bent on seducing or injuring a youth who was earnestly intermeddling with all knowledge in order that he might be qualified for the Christian ministry, would have tempted the tyro to be satisfied with a mere smattering of languages and their literature, and to be proud of the most superficial acquirements, instead of inspiring and assisting him to make a thorough conquest of all the languages he undertook, and of all the knowledge that lay within his reach; yet to count all this but worthless except as enabling him more fully to understand and to recommend to others the 'unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ.'

John Brown was born in 1722, in the county of

Perth, of poor parents, whom he at an early age lost—so that he had no advantages except those within his own resolute and energetic nature for acquiring an education ; and such a wide and varied education as he did acquire would have seemed incredible to those who observed the poor shepherd-boy tending a flock on the hills near Abernethy. His intellectual faculties were of no high order, but he had the common faculties in very uncommon strength ; and he had an iron will for action, resistance, and endurance. He could study sixteen hours a day ; but of course not a little of the labour performed at such an unduly protracted sitting must have been of inferior quality. Rest he considered idleness ; and rather than rest, he would plod on, making historical abridgments that were of little practical value. He prized industry sometimes more for its own sake than for the ends to which it was devoted.

Though Mr. Brown, by the Synod's order, took charge of the students for the session immediately after Mr. Swanston's death, yet he was not installed in the professorship until 1768. About this time the Synod revived some regulations that had been framed towards the beginning of the Secession, with the view of securing that none but young men who had been sufficiently trained in the

classics and philosophy, and who on examination showed their acquaintance with the leading truths of the Christian system and with the authorized standards of the Church, should be admitted to the Divinity Hall. In consequence, too, of a petition from the students, the Synod resolved to begin the formation of a Divinity Hall library in 1770, the books to be kept in the professor's house at Haddington.

In the first session of the Hall as conducted by Mr. Brown, there were *thirteen* new students, but in the next session the number sunk to *four*; and similar 'ups and downs' marked almost the whole term of his professorship. In 1777 there were *eighteen new* students, and some five or six of these were of distinguished ability, and afterwards rose to high distinction and influence in the Church; but in the following year there were only *five*, and this number went down in the next year to *three*. In the last four sessions of Mr. Brown's term of office, the new students were *nine, nine, eleven, and thirteen*, showing that the fresh supply was becoming steadier. We believe that the annual average given by the Rev. Dr. James Peddie (who attended the Haddington Hall towards the middle of the Brown term) of the whole class—including the students of the five sessions—as *thirty*,

would be true of the class during that whole term.

On looking over the Haddington Hall-registers, we are struck by the very large number of eminent preachers who were trained by Mr. Brown. They had good natural abilities, which, in almost every case, were admirably cultivated and exercised for ministerial usefulness ; and for this bent they were, and acknowledged themselves to be, deeply indebted to the lessons and counsels of their professor.

Mr. Brown took a superintendence over his students at other hours besides the Hall hours. He was wont to visit a succession of students at their lodgings between the hours of *six* and *eight* in the morning ; and as those lodgings were generally in the houses of members of his own congregation, he found a ready entrance. His object was to ascertain what was their practice as to *early rising*, about which he himself was a bigot. There were not a few who were rudely startled out of their slumbers by a loud and peremptory challenge, that was occasionally helped by a poke from the 'pastoral staff;' and on looking up, they saw the grave professor, who forthwith sternly rebuked them as sluggards. These took several expedients against being again surprised ; they prevailed upon



the landlady to burst open their room-door whenever she heard the professor's step ; and then there was a hasty leap from bed into a chair at the table on which a theological tome lay open. The professor entering saw the student so eagerly absorbed in reading as not to be aware of his presence until he spoke ; and then the student was heartily commended for his early rising and reading, but kindly cautioned against such an over-zeal for study as led him to neglect exchanging his night-clothes for his day-apparel. Sometimes, when the door-signal was either not given or not heard in time, the student would quickly and quietly hide under the bed, and would be greatly relieved by the words which the retiring professor addressed to the landlady—‘ Ah ! he's up and out for an early walk—good lad ! ’ There were ludicrous scenes in connection with this morning domiciliary inspection. We doubt if what has been said, that the ‘ familiarity ’ displayed in those visits ‘ did not impair respect ’ for the professor, could be generally true. The visit was more characteristic of a school-usher than of a Divinity Hall professor ; and if each lodging had been locked against the intruder, while—as he stood—he was treated to an *extempore* shower-bath, could the Presbytery or the Synod have said anything ? The professor does not seem to

have called upon students at the other 'end of the day' to ascertain when they went to bed, though this too might have occasioned curious scenes.

The professor's doctrinal lectures formed a system of divinity which was flanked and fortified by an array of Scripture texts at every point ; and a copy of that system had to be written out in full, and with all the Scripture quotations given at length, by each student. This heavy task of transcription was performed during more than the half of Mr. Brown's professorship, until he got it printed, as it ought to have been from the first. But he had set the young men an example of industry in the matter by writing two or three copies with his own hand ; still, the method followed by Professor Bruce of Whitburn, in keeping a *printer* at work, would not only have been much easier for himself and his students, but far better in releasing them and him from manual drudgery to attend profitably to mental labour.

It seems strange that after, in the opening years of his professorship, he had prepared his 'system of divinity,' and placed it—either in a manuscript or printed form—in the hands of students, he ceased to give regular lectures on any part of its outlines or details. He preferred to go daily through a section of that system, treating it care-

fully and exhaustively in oral *examinations*, in which he luminously exhibited every point, and satisfied himself that the students thoroughly understood and would long remember it. He read occasional papers of his own on Church history, and on the origin, early progress, and aims of the Secession; and frequently he gave valuable and impressive addresses on the several branches of pastoral duty. These, and his farewell addresses at the close of a session, had been composed and were read with all the energy, fervour, and solemnity of his nature; and while they often had a pathos that moved the giddiest of the young to tears, they abounded in such appeals and warnings as overwhelmed the class with awe. His representations of the careless, the slothful, the hypocritical, or the immoral minister, had a vivid and glowing, yet fearfully *realistic* power; and when they were followed up by searching interrogations plied vehemently upon the thirty young men who sat before him—as to whether any of them, or *which* of them, were likely to belong to one of those categories of clerical character,—a deeper impression than the shudder which ran through the class was produced. Those addresses, even when now incidentally read in the pages of some religious periodical to which they were separately sent many years after his

death, are found to retain the Baxterian fire and energy which marked them on their original delivery. The celebrated infidel, who, when describing the impressions which he had received from hearing John Brown in the pulpit, and when seeking to express the *realistic* character of the service, said, 'He preached *as if Jesus Christ were at his elbow*,' might have added, and *as if the law were at his back*; for of the terrors of the law he invariably made a solemn use in preaching the grace and mercies of the gospel. What he was in the pulpit, he was in the Theological Chair, and even when solitary at his desk he was writing on a religious theme.

Mr. Brown had two meetings daily with his students; and though the utmost punctuality was exacted as to the minute when those meetings *began*, the minute, or even the hour for *closing* them was neither fixed nor observed. The morning meeting was at ten o'clock, and as the clock struck, the professor taking his chair must see all the students in their seats; but instead of rising to leave as the next hour struck, they were kept there generally for another hour, and not unfrequently for other two hours! The appointed section of his 'system' had to be gone through in thorough examination, and the professor must be

satisfied that the doctrine stated, scripturally illustrated, and defended, was fully fixed in the minds of students. Then, too, occasional readings from his papers fell to be given until 'the wee short hour ayont the twal' (P.M. however!) was reached.

The afternoon meeting was occupied in hearing students' discourses, and with the criticism which class-fellows and the professor offered upon them. As a proof of the geniality which was infused into his strict management of the Hall, many more of the students regularly stood forward as critics in his time than under any former professor.

In 1786, it was enacted by the Burgher Synod that all applicants for admission to the Divinity Hall must have gone through a classical and philosophical training of at least three sessions in one of our Universities; and Presbyteries were enjoined to be strict in their examinations of each candidate's attainments.

This eminently useful and honoured professor died in the summer of 1787, leaving a body of remarkably efficient ministers, whom he during his twenty years' term of office had trained, to cherish his memory with veneration and love, as well as with a gratitude which for their sake was shared by the Church at large.

A successor even to John Brown of Hadding-

ton, with his qualifications, some of which were peculiarly rare, it was not *now* difficult to find; and the eyes of all in the Synod and Church were at once turned to the *Rev. George Lawson*, minister at Selkirk, then in the thirty-sixth year of his age, —a period of life which promised an unusually long career for his unrivalled combination of gifts, acquirements, and qualities as a teacher.

It has been said that when Mr. Lawson attended the Divinity Hall at Haddington, Mr. Brown not only observed with delight his pupil's extensive scholarship, Biblical and theological knowledge, and pure personal character, but privately spoke of him as fitted and destined to succeed him in the chair.

The Rev. Dr. William Peddie, in his admirable memoir of his father, mentions that Mr. Brown had once said 'that he did not know whether he had been of much service in his generation, but he was happy that he had been the means of bringing up four young men for the ministry—Andrew Swanson, *George Lawson*, David Greig, and James Peddie.' Mr. Lawson had entered the Hall when it was at Kinross, and under the charge of Mr. Swanston; but he was there only for a single session, and the greater part of his Hall attendance was at Haddington, under the training of Mr. Brown, who,

in the close intercourse which he had with his students, could not fail to notice the clear, unpretentious, and even unconscious superiority which Lawson, with his Nathanael-like simplicity, exhibited over all his class-fellows. It did not require much of Mr. Brown's discrimination and sagacity to enable him to foresee that at some future stage Mr. Lawson would be worthy to fill a Divinity Chair; but it was scarcely in keeping with Mr. Brown's caution to foretell that Mr. Lawson would be called by the Synod to succeed him in that chair.

Mr. Lawson was unanimously chosen in 1787, and the Hall and library were removed to Selkirk. For thirty-three years this was the spot to which the Burgher students from all parts of the country annually repaired for a two months' sojourn—eager to sit at the feet of a Christian sage whom they loved not less than they revered, and to be charmed with the peculiarities of Hall life in the romantic and beautiful district. Yet it might have been supposed that, in the case of first-year students (from whom regular attendance at the University classes had now been more rigorously exacted), to come from a national University established in stately buildings, equipped in all the faculties with many eminent professors, and attended by a con-

course of students, and to join a denominational 'seminary' set up in a rural 'meeting-house,' where only thirty or forty young men were to be taught by the pastor of that meeting-house, would be a disenchanting transition—almost like being sent back from college to school! Yet the interest around the dignified College yielded to that which invested the humble Hall. Nor did the transition from a large staff of far-famed professors to a single minister of the denomination, prove to be other than a merely *apparent* declension, which was speedily rectified by experience; for that minister, as divinity professor, impressed all classes of disciples with an enthusiastic admiration of the rare combination of extraordinary qualifications which he possessed, and with a settled conviction that he was at least on a level with the greatest of the college professors. First-year students entered who were sometimes prepared to find that Lawson's merits had been immensely exaggerated; yet soon those critics were constrained to acquiesce in their neighbours' judgment, and to recognise their own ideal of excellence in the plainly-dressed worth which was universally appreciated. A single week at the Selkirk Hall sufficed to bring the most wilful and erratic minds—as well as the frigid and the self-conceited—into 'one accord' of enthusiasm



about the professor, who yet was not only careless, but unconscious of any arts for early producing favourable impressions. He never sought, by skilful arrangement, to cast the shadow of his greatness, vastly magnified, 'before' him ; yet strangers passed rapidly into the circle of his admirers, and he was scarcely seen before he was duly estimated. His presence and teaching formed the principal charm in Selkirk Hall life, whether as experienced or remembered.

We have now arrived at a period in the history of the Divinity Hall when the professors were daily seen and intimately known by many with whom we have conversed, and from whom we have heard descriptions which, along with extant portraits, give an idea of their personal appearance. The Selkirk professor's face was different from any face ever seen in the clerical or professional ranks, or even among the laity, though it was unequivocally of the Scottish type. It was, as we have elsewhere [*in Dr. Adam Thomson's Memoir*] said, the plainest of faces, roughened all over with small-pox, which had also stained the complexion with a sallow and sickly hue ; yet it never suggested uncomeliness, far less harshness. The most of the features were common in themselves, but uncommon from their relative irregu-

larity. The eyes were small, and though wide open, as if they never even winked, and looking straight forward, they had an inwardly absorbed expression, as if the attention of his mind did not follow his glance ; the brow was shapely and high, except when a 'preposterous' wig flapped over his temples as he unconsciously shifted it. He might have sprung from a long line of moorland shepherds—there brooded over his face such an expression of pastoral calm, contentment, and self-communion in grave solitudes. Coarse as was its texture and dingy its complexion, the face shone with purity, benevolence, and wisdom ; and a peculiarly artless and fascinating smile lighted up both the innocence and the intelligence. His looks denoted a sagacity free from cunning, and a humanity and honesty which inspired every beholder to trust him. The whole aspect of the man had not only a novelty, but a depth and variety of expression which would better reward an hour's study, than many a handsome face would reward a single moment's glance.

The lectures at the Selkirk Hall extended over the whole course of five sessions, and discussed theoretical and practical divinity. The professor exhibited the leading truths of the Christian system with force and freshness, and vindicated

them fairly and powerfully. Here there was scope for originality only in giving to those truths a grander aspect with unexpected associations, and in rendering this transfiguration of them a defence against scepticism. It was in his subsidiary lectures upon pastoral work that his sagacity, his experience, and his learning rendered his discussions and examples singularly interesting and valuable. He would fail, however, in constructing a scheme of pulpit rhetoric, or in presenting such rules as were likely to form pulpit orators of the highest class ; still he offered many directions that were fitted to be of inestimable value to all who undertook the function of preaching.

In examination he had a happy art, and by it he tested the knowledge of his students, and easily conveyed to them the rich stores of his own. He also prescribed regular readings by the class in the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures.

The average length of each of the two meetings daily was an hour and a half : and the time seldom dragged, the professor investing all the exercises with interest, as well as making them profitable. The advanced students had what were called 'popular sermons' delivered by them on a certain evening of the week, before as many members of the Doctor's congregation as chose to attend.

Under Dr. Lawson's professorship the new students steadily increased, though there was still a frequent variation downwards, but never to the low number often reached under former professors. In his first session (1787) there were *eighteen* first-year students; in the next year *ten*; and for the two succeeding years *fourteen* each. In 1794 there were *seventeen*, and in the next year *twenty-two* new students. But in 1800 there were only *six*, and next year *four*. In the next four years the rise from this low point was so slight that the attention of the Synod was called to the question as to how—in the future—vacant congregations were to be supplied. Congregations had of late been rapidly increasing, and a larger provision of pastors was necessary; but the requisite number of students was not now forthcoming—hence the probationers were too few. A committee was appointed, and an able address written by Dr. James Peddie was issued, pointing out to the members of the Church the dangers to which the scarcity of probationers tended, and the urgent necessity for a more liberal scale of remuneration to ministers, as otherwise young men could not be expected to devote themselves to a life of such starvation as the Church could easily prevent or alleviate. Yet the question of a large force of

probationers has two sides ; and the Synod looked at one alone. It would be cruel for a denomination to stimulate such a supply of its home-preachers as should be greatly in excess of its vacant congregations. A Church should not waste or sacrifice a hundred probationers in providing twenty congregations with pastors. Yet, if any ordained minister cannot on some Sabbath, either during his holiday absence from his pulpit or when he has to officiate elsewhere, easily find a preacher to take his place, he complains loudly that there is a dearth of probationers, and he seeks to stimulate an additional supply ; though he ought to be aware that no young man would devote himself to the long course of varied, costly, and engrossing studies imposed upon every intending probationer, merely for the sake of becoming a day's 'stop-gap' in the ministry of some hundreds of ordained men. It is only when those probationers are, in carefully-estimated proportion, too few for the vacant congregations seeking pastors, and not for the occasional wants of congregations having pastors, that attempts should be made to increase the supply. Preposterous, too, is the view that it is necessary or desirable for every vacant congregation to hear scores of candidates, in order that its judgment may be free from

perplexity as to the man to be chosen as a pastor.

The result of the Synod's action was that stipends, which hitherto had remained at the small sum fixed at first, became less inadequate, and the dearth in students passed away.

The first-year students, who had dwindled down to an average of *six*, soon rose to *twelve, fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen*; while the occasional variations never fell within sight of such a zero, but were slight and insignificant. In the last session of Dr. Lawson's professorship the number was *sixteen*, the Hall-register at Selkirk closing alphabetically with two well-known names, John Smart (afterwards Dr. Smart of Leith) and John Taylor (afterwards Dr. Taylor, first a minister at Auchtermuchty, next a theological professor in Canada, and finally a minister at Busby).

Down to the close of his life Dr. Lawson maintained his influence and his fame, for they were not founded on any tricks and pretences of his own, or on any delusions of his brethren, but on a remarkable union of merits which struck all observers, and could only be hidden to his own modesty. Marischal College, Aberdeen, gracefully honoured him with a D.D. degree; and his own Synod, not long before his death, to show its

gratitude for, and confidence in, his invaluable services as professor, spontaneously voted him a gift of money. The students were not less enthusiastic in their appreciation, and surprised him with the presentation of his portrait, which henceforth would meet his eye more frequently than did his face, for he was not supposed to go often to a mirror; and indeed, from having seen his own face so seldom and looked at it so slightly, he must have been incapable of determining whether or not the portrait was a good likeness! The students gave him also a silver cup, which the professor 'hanselled' on an early day by treating the donors to a glass of 'negus' from the cup. All his tastes were of the simplest order. On one occasion, when reference was made to the case of an individual who, having recently come into the possession of unexpected wealth, had taken to a most luxurious style of living, Dr. Lawson remarked that if a fortune were to fall into his own hands, he did not know that it would make any other difference than that *he would dine on sheep's-head or haggis a little more frequently,* —for his tastes were Scotch as well as simple.

All that he wrote for the press bore his intellectual and spiritual likeness. It had his sterling excellencies of head and heart, his profound reach

of thought, his wisdom and his sagacity, steeped in the unction of a loving, sincere, and innocent nature, and conveyed in the simplest and most transparent style ; yet, unconscious of its value, oblivious of the interest which it would possess for clerical and middle-class readers, and only desirous that it should circulate among the poor and be useful to them, he put it upon the coarsest and dingiest paper, and arrayed it in the cheapest garb. He sent forth his precious oracles in the mean exterior of *chap-books*.

Yet, after all that he published, he left eighty manuscript volumes, the matter of which would be fully equal in excellence to what had passed into print ; for his studious life was a mild ecstasy which knew neither elevation nor depression, and there was a uniformity of merit in all that he wrote. Would that all the sermons in those eighty manuscript volumes were transcribed by a *legible* hand (which the Doctor's hand certainly was not, for his penmanship might have been done by the feather-end of the quill), to be sold to the hundreds of English clergymen who read from the pulpit what they do not write !

The professor was a cordial supporter of that union for which negotiations were now proceeding between the long-separated Burghers and Anti-



Burghers; and he was specially gratified to find that his own students were enthusiastic about the movement, and with the view of helping it were carrying on a correspondence with the students under Professor Paxton's charge in Edinburgh. Like Moses, however, who was permitted to approach, but not to enter the promised land, Dr. Lawson lived down to the year, but not to the day, of the union. His eyes, before they could view the delightful spectacle of the two Churches incorporated in one Church, were closed in death. He died on the 21st of February 1820, having adorned the professorship for nearly thirty-three years, and completed the long life-term of 'three-score years and ten.'

The following graphic sketch of Dr. Lawson by the mighty, yet in this case, loving hand of the illustrious Thomas Carlyle, will be eagerly welcomed. It was given in a letter to the late Rev. Dr. John Macfarlane, the biographer of Lawson:—

‘5 CHEYNE ROW, CHELSEA, 24<sup>th</sup> May 1870.

‘DEAR SIR,—Your biography of Dr. Lawson has interested me not a little: bringing present to me from afar much that it is good to be reminded of; strangely awakening many thoughts, many scenes and recollections of forty, of sixty years

ago, all now grown very sad to me, but also beautiful and solemn.

‘I can perfectly remember reading Sallust with the venerable Mr. Johnstone in that old manse now vanished ; and how completely he made me see into every fibre and wrinkle of the meaning. Sixty-five years ago this was a work of love on his part (for my father and mother’s sake), and to me the beginning of much benefit in the school-way. Strange to reflect, that Dr. Lawson (what I did not know before) was also a pupil of his ; *he* the first most probably, and *I* for certain the last.

‘It seems to me, I gather from your narrative and from his own letters, a perfectly credible account of Dr. Lawson’s character, course of life, and labour in the world ; and the reflection rises in me, that there was not in the British Island a more completely genuine, pious-minded, diligent, and faithful man. Altogether original, too ; peculiar to Scotland, and so far as I can guess, unique even there and then. England will never know him out of any book, or at least it would take the genius of a SHAKESPEARE to make him known by that method ; but if England did, it might much and wholesomely astonish her. Seen in his intrinsic character, no simple-minded, more perfect lover of wisdom do I know of in that generation.

‘Professor Lawson, you may believe, was a great name in my boy-circle, never spoken of but with reverence and thankfulness by those I loved best. In a dim but singularly conclusive way, I can still remember seeing him and hearing him preach (though of that latter, except the fact of it, I retain nothing); but of the figure, face, tone, dress, I have a vivid impression (perhaps about my twelfth year, *that is*, in summer of 1807–8). It seems to me he had a better face than in your frontispiece, more strength, sagacity, shrewdness, simplicity, a broader jaw, more hair of his own (I don’t remember any wig)—*altogether a most superlative steel-grey Scottish peasant (and Scottish Socrates of the period)*—really, as I now perceive, more like the twin-brother of that Athenian Socrates who went about supreme in Athens in wooden shoes, than any man I have ever ocularly seen.

‘Many other figures in your narrative were by name or person familiar to my eyes or mind in that now far-off period of my life. You may believe me, I am much obliged by your bringing under my notice a book which has had such singular interest to me; and, indeed, by your writing the book itself, which certainly was well worth doing. With many thanks and good wishes, I am, yours sincerely,

T. CARLYLE.’

In strange and far from pleasing contrast with this singularly cordial testimony to the greatness and worth of the Selkirk professor by Thomas Carlyle—the unrivalled discriminator of genuine ‘heroes,’ and the terrible Rhadamanthus for pretenders—is the complete silence that was maintained about Dr. Lawson by the most gifted and famous of all Scotchmen, though his would have been no mere boyish memory growing out from the incident of having only *once* seen and heard him.

We allude to SIR WALTER SCOTT, who gloried in recognising and cherishing all of greatness and of goodness that belonged to Scotland; and all that was peculiar in the intellect and learning, the character and habits, and the very appearance and dress of the ‘sage of Selkirk,’ could not but have a rare charm for Scott’s natural and national genius. Nor was there any separation by distance of place or of age; for was not Sir Walter the ‘Shirra o’ Selkirk,’ and was not his ‘castle of romance’ at Abbotsford in such proximity as allowed the maintenance of frequent and intimate intercourse? During the best and brightest period of Scott’s manhood, he passed his summers and winters in the district where Lawson’s presence was strongly and widely felt.

Scott, too, did not shrink from acquaintance, and even from friendship, with *clergymen*, but spent many pleasant hours in the company of Dr. Douglas of Galashiels and Dr. Somerville of Jedburgh. To him, with his Tory and High Church prejudices, a *Seceding* minister was an 'unclean animal ;' yet the Anti-Burgher minister, Dr. John Jamieson, the author of the *Scottish Dictionary*, was a chosen intimate and friend.

Lawson and Scott, however, remained entire strangers to each other ; and in the copious correspondence and journals which Lockhart has published, and also annotated from his own stores of information about every individual with whom his illustrious father-in-law came into contact, there is not the slightest allusion to the Burgher minister and divinity professor at Selkirk. Enough is known to warrant the belief that the keeping aloof was not determined by the latter, though he was not the man to thrust himself into the society of any distinguished neighbour. Whenever students spoke of the great Border minstrel, who was also at the time generally admired as the 'Great Unknown,' that was producing the matchless *Waverley Novels*, the professor did not hesitate to join in emphatic and hearty praise of Scott's genius.

This circumstance of Sir Walter keeping himself

a stranger to Dr. Lawson is altogether unaccountable. They do not seem even to have been in each other's company, except on the occasion of Prince Leopold passing through Selkirk, when Dr. Lawson paid the prince the finest compliment which the royal visitor said he had ever received.

We cannot but wish, though we wish in vain, that Scott had been to Dr. Lawson what he was to Dr. John Jamieson; and then the Selkirk reminiscences, which the Burgher students cherished to the end of their days, might have had some Abbotsford associations growing out of Saturday excursions to the neighbourhood of the 'great magician's' residence, and adding a new charm to memories of Hall life in Ettrick.

At the spring meeting of the Burgher (or Associate) Synod, a minute strongly expressive of 'the peculiar and important obligations' which 'ministers and the people of their charge' were under to the deceased professor, 'the impression of whose amiable and venerable character for piety, extensive knowledge of the word of God, sacred erudition, and every excellence which can adorn the man, the Christian, and the professor of divinity, they ever wish to retain and cherish as an excitement to the faithful discharge of the duties of their office,' was recorded; and a large com-

mittee of the leading members of the court was appointed to 'nominate a leet' from which the Synod should elect a successor to Dr. Lawson. This committee nominated four—Drs. Dick and Peddie, and Messrs. Brown and Marshall. By two successive votes the leet was reduced to Dr. Dick and Mr. John Brown. In the final vote Dr. Dick had a large majority, and was declared the duly elected professor; but he immediately rose and declined the office. Subsequently, when urged by a committee to accept, he yielded so far as to consent to take charge of the students during the session for 1820; but at the same time announced his purpose not to occupy the chair, and expressed his hope that at the autumn meeting the Synod would regard the office as vacant, and elect another to be professor.

If it be asked why one who was so admirably qualified for the post was so resolute against holding it, it might also be asked why the Synod had shown itself so divided in judgment that other candidates received considerable support? The Rev. John Brown had already distinguished himself for his *exegetical* ability; but as yet there was not for this such a department as that which he subsequently filled and adorned; and unquestionably for the single professorship, which was mainly

to deal with systematic, whilst not neglecting pastoral theology, neither he nor any other minister could compete with Dr. John Dick, whose qualifications were pre-eminent. The election of such a man ought to have been unanimous and cordial in the highest degree ; and when it was weakened by other preferences and marred by the nomination and support of rival candidates, we cannot wonder that Dr. Dick, who was of keenly sensitive nature, was neither immediately nor strongly attracted by the modified honour. Dr. M'Kerrow, the able and impartial historian of the Secession, conceals the fact that Dr. Dick was raised to the Theological Chair, not by acclamation, but by a 'large majority.' None of the discredit falls upon the new professor ; it rests entirely and exclusively with his brethren of the Synod.

In Glasgow Dr. Dick taught the divinity class in the session of 1820, which was opened a few days *before* the union of the Burgher and Anti-Burgher Churches ; but he regarded, and called upon the Synod to regard, his functions as merely *temporary* ; and at the close of the session he urged his brethren to release him from those functions, and to choose again a professor for the *United Hall*, which was to have its first session in 1821. Thus down to the time of the union he refused to



become professor, though he agreed to teach the students for a single year.

When that union was consummated, the two Divinity Halls, and also the *United Divinity Hall* which was now formed by the incorporation of both, had a very unsettled condition. There were two remarkably gifted and accomplished professors, yet the one declined to take and to hold the professorship to which he had been recently appointed; and the other, who had for many years in the Anti-Burgher Hall occupied the Theological Chair with distinguished fidelity and success, refused to go into the united Church, or have any place in the United Divinity Hall. This Hall would be attended, in the session of 1821, by considerably more than a hundred students; but these had the prospect of being left without the invaluable teaching and training both of Dick and of Paxton. It was certain that they would be—they actually *were*—deprived of the services of one of these, viz. the old professor; and there was the strongest probability that the new professor would persevere in his determination to withdraw from the exercise of those functions which had been recently and against his will imposed upon him. When the students of the United Divinity Hall met in the autumn of 1821, they might find that not only *one*,

but both of their masters in theology had been 'taken from their head.'

The 'school of the prophets' was threatened with the loss not only of Elijah, but of Elisha. Not only was Professor Paxton to disappear from the *United Secession Divinity Hall*, and even from the class of his own Anti-Burgher divinity students (though Paxton's declining to go into the Union Church and Hall had a much more striking resemblance to Elijah's flight through the wilderness to the shelter of a juniper-tree, than to Elijah's final 'rapture' from earth), but Professor Dick was expected to lay aside his 'mantle,' and no longer act as theological teacher.

In the midst of this unhappy uncertainty about the professors of divinity, the union of the two Churches and the two Halls took place in September 1820. Dr. Dick had not accepted the appointment to the Theological Chair; hence in the present chapter we refrain from indicating his rare assemblage of qualifications.

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## CHAPTER V.

1820-1825.

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The union of the Burgher and Anti-Burgher Churches and their Divinity Halls—The United Secession Divinity Hall, taught in Glasgow by Dr. John Dick, as single Professor for a few Years—His eminent qualifications.

DURING the seventy-three years of separation which ensued upon the quarrel of 1747, both branches of the Secession flourished greatly, the policy of the Church of Scotland, as guided by Principal Robertson, having continued to furnish the earnest observers of religion among the people of Scotland with the strongest reasons for seeking a refuge from ecclesiastical oppression and doctrinal starvation within the Secession which sprung up in the districts that were severely affected by patronage and the various evils of triumphant Moderatism. During the latter half of that term of separation, both the Burghers and the Anti-Burghers prospered exceedingly, spread over the length and breadth of the land, and carried the gospel and their denominational testimony into Ireland and

England, and even into America. At home they had grown to be 154 congregations for the Burghers, and 129 for the Anti-Burghers; and the union made them 283. In addition to the ministers of these congregations, they had fifty-two probationers, and considerably more than a hundred students.

We do not dwell further upon the frequent and prolonged dealings of the Synod's committees with Dr. Dick, to overcome his extreme reluctance to take a fixed charge of the students. It is enough to say that, to the deep satisfaction of the Synod, and not less to the entire and enthusiastic approval of the students, he yielded to the pressure of his clerical brethren's entreaties.

He followed the course pursued by his predecessors in the arrangement of the Hall time; but his lecturing and his criticism upon the discourses of students were stamped by his individual character, and were taken for *original* by all who heard them.

His personal appearance indicated his intellectual nature. A symmetrical form, which was always attired with extreme taste and neatness—so that the plain presbyter could have competed with any Scottish or even English bishop—and a face with regular features and the smoothest texture of skin, with small but sparkling eyes, which

seemed to have their power of attraction as well as of vision helped by the spectacles that he wore, made up a most imposing representation of the model minister and the model professor of divinity! A high and—in proportion to the other features and the whole face—a broad forehead was the crowning ornament. The whole face was constantly expressive of dignity, keen intellect, and critical power. It might not indicate large capacity, commanding energy, or intense passion; and even the scorn which, when roused, he could display, glittered with icy coldness, instead of blazing or flashing with a scorching vehemence. Dr. Dick's countenance, like his intellect, gleamed with the radiance of a winter sun, there being in it no glow either of imagination or of passion.

His critiques upon the students' discourses were regarded as oracular, except in cases which required a discrimination between thought that flowered into poetry, and thought that was merely decked with poetic phraseology. He is said to have come into collision with Robert Pollok, the author of the then forthcoming *Course of Time*. Over a discourse in which the poet-preacher descanted on the vanity and foolishness of human nature, some description more swelling and more gaudily coloured than the far from sober context,

elicited from his fellow-students a general laugh, which was responded to by a smile on the professor's face. The indignant preacher immediately thrust in the following *impromptu* clause, to complete the climax on which he was engaged : 'And folly was never more apparent than when it sat on the brow of wisdom !' A 'hit, a hit, a palpable hit,' yet singularly feeble—too feeble—even when launched from under the frowning brows of the preacher—to expel folly from its conspicuous seat opposite.

Dr. Dick was scarcely the man to feel himself mortally wounded by such a punishment. The anecdote is silent as to the effect produced ; but the retaliatory clause would not have been preserved in the memory of successive generations of students, unless it had been supposed to be worthy of a poet's vengeful ire !

The professor did all that he could to encourage students to offer critical remarks upon each other's Hall sermons and exercises, for he was persuaded that the practice had many advantages and few evils ; but the judgment which he himself delivered upon every discourse was so full, so impartial, and both in matter and style so admirable, that all other attempts at criticism were felt by his pupils to be superfluous and impertinent.

The hour, however, which invariably found the students prepared to listen with eager interest, was that in which Dr. Dick lectured on 'Systematic Theology.' The complete course of lectures has long been published, and the theological world has expressed a nearly unanimous verdict on the high and sustained ability with which the outlines and details of his scheme of revealed truth were propounded, harmonized, and defended. It took its place in the foremost rank of standard theological works ; and if it has ever been displaced, it has only been *recently* so by the elaborate and learned work of Hodge.

We are, indeed, far from supposing that the justly renowned American divine surpasses the Secession professor for a higher and broader, a more fully developed, and a more finely balanced intellect, and that he is naturally better qualified to represent theology as a grand whole, organically and symmetrically made up of many small parts, the system and all its details being pervaded by one life. We are not sure but that Dr. Dick had a more compact as well as a more concentrated force, and a keener precision of mind ; but, unquestionably, Dr. Hodge had larger and more varied resources, not *from within*, but *from without*,—the rich accumulations of Biblical and scientific

knowledge that have been made during the forty years which have elapsed since Dr. Dick's death. Of those accumulations, especially of such as have been contributed by German research, Dr. Hodge has availed himself with unsparing diligence; and, placed on this pedestal of scholarship, his system rises above that of the most accomplished among his predecessors.

Dr. Dick, both by his lectures and by his examinations (which went over the range not only of these lectures, but of the best books that had appeared in exposition and defence of the doctrines under discussion), was regarded by his students as a *model* professor of theology—fulfilling with rare exactness the combination of duties so admirably described by Dr. Chalmers in the following sentence: 'While I would have the professor to expound colloquially all that is best in the existent literature of his profession, I would have him to put forth all originalities of his own through the medium of written lectures, whether these originalities should lie in the argument, or in the mode of putting the argument.' Chalmers himself was as decidedly inferior to Dick in the *colloquial exposition* of whatever *was best in existent* theology, as he was superior to Dick and to Hodge in the 'originalities' which he put both into the matter



and the manner of his reasoning. In some of the very highest functions of a theological Professor, Chalmers was not less unapproachable than he was as a preacher ; and he was a 'King of Men' in his chair as well as in his pulpit.

Dr. Dick's course of academical lectures (which, as at first read in the class-room and as subsequently published, numbered 105) exhibited what was not a mere system of truths that, after being shaped by exact definition, were arranged in perfect order, fitted to each other, and raised into a justly proportioned structure—but rather a 'body of divinity,' organized, limbed, and articulated,—the whole and its parts connected with each other through life and growth.

In the discussion and illustration of any of the doctrines, nothing had been transferred from the pulpit to the theological chair ; the professor had borrowed nothing, not even a single sentence, from his stock of sermons. All the 105 lectures must have been written expressly for the Divinity Hall, being too compact in matter and too severely classical in style for the instruction of the more popular audiences addressed by him on Sundays. In his lectures not only were the ideas too strongly compressed, but — instead of being prolonged, amplified, or repeated — they were too quickly

dismissed and succeeded by new ideas, to be understood or appreciated by unprofessional hearers. His sermons, indeed, were entirely free from redundancies, repetitions, swollen declamations, and anything like a plethora of words, while they had the unfailing virtue of perspicuity; still they lacked the extreme concentration of thought, and the rapid transition from one thought to another, which were to be found in his Hall lectures. The insertion of passages from his pulpit discourses in these lectures would have introduced a looser texture and a lighter substance of thought, and a less shining clearness of expression. He disdained, as a professor, to borrow a shred from the immense webs of his pulpit discoursing; and for the severer and more continuous strain upon his faculties, he had his reward in the deeper admiration of his students, who never could detect in any of his prelections the fragment or the peroration of a sermon. Nor did he levy supplies from his excellent 'Essay' on 'Inspiration'; but all that he read to his students was expressly written for them, and in spontaneous elucidation of his dogmatic system.

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## CHAPTER VI.



1825-1847.

The single professorship doubled—The appointment of the Rev. Dr. John Mitchell as Professor of Biblical Literature—Death of Dr. Dick, in 1833—Deliberations about enlarging and improving Divinity Hall tuition—The appointment, in 1834, of three new colleagues to Dr. Mitchell—Four Professors for the departments of Systematic Theology, Biblical Literature, Exegetical Theology, and Pastoral Theology—Retirement, through bodily infirmity, of Drs. Mitchell and Duncan; and the appointment of Drs. Eadie and Harper—Death of Dr. Balmer, 1844; and in 1846 the transference of Dr. Harper from the Chair of Pastoral Theology to Systematic Theology—The Divinity Hall, as taught by the Rev. Drs. Dick, Mitchell, Brown, Balmer, Duncan, Eadie, and Harper, at Glasgow and Edinburgh—The Hall left with only three professors, Drs. Brown, Eadie, and Harper; but the approaching union with the Relief Church more than sufficient to fill up the vacant chairs.

AT the time of his election to the chair, Dr. Dick was in the fifty-sixth year of his age, displaying the maturity both of intellectual and of physical vigour without any decay. When, five years later, the Synod determined to provide the Divinity Hall with a second professor, there was not the faintest surmise that that vigour was being in the

least abated, and that he was beginning to be less capable than ever of overtaking all his duties. On the contrary, he was every year proving himself more entirely efficient; and there was not a flaw in the confidence, satisfaction, and pride of his clerical brethren. He was teaching systematic theology with the highest ability; but no single man could do this, and at the same time attend to a collateral and most important department—giving instruction in Biblical criticism, and in the original languages of the Old and the New Testaments—except in the most superficial manner.

The Synod resolved to institute a professorship for expounding the history, evidences, and interpretation of the sacred Jewish and Christian books, and for examining the students in Greek and Hebrew. As Dr. Dick had belonged to what down to the union was the Burgher party, so a person to fill the second chair in the Divinity Hall was gracefully taken from what had been the Anti-Burgher party. The choice was sanctioned by far higher considerations, for the person honoured by it was the Rev. Dr. John Mitchell of Glasgow—a man of remarkably fine intellect and of fair scholarship, who also had a life, character, and nature that were pre-eminently adorned by the Christian

virtues, graces, and charities. He had an assemblage of such qualities as led all who came within the circle of his personal fascination to regard him as a *second Saint John*. His looks, words, and actions all attested that he was the perfect model of a *Christian gentleman*.

Dr. Mitchell was a little above the middle stature, of large yet well-proportioned build, massive face, with full and bright eyes, and a broad forehead which would also have been seen to be a lofty one, but for the overhanging 'eaves' of his dark-brown wig. Not a 'hair,' or the stump of a hair, on chin and cheeks that had not 'fallen' before the morning's razor. His attire was strictly and invariably clerical, and we cannot imagine him ever *out* of it. His coat and his silk knee-breeches and stockings were faultless in their 'fit,' and never showed a wrinkle, a speck, or a stain, while his cravat might have been 'fixed' by a Brummell or a D'Orsay. He moved with easy grace; yet, while he never seemed to be in any hurry, his was not the step of a loungeur, or of one who had not an occupation or aim. Still, the handsome form and the strongly-marked features gave to observers the idea of predominant good-nature, kindliness, and benevolence; for though both healthy and vigorous, they did not leave the impression of being athletic, or marked

by a power either for aggression or even for defence. From top to toe every inch sent forth a pure and inexhaustible graciousness ; and it was plain that, like Sterne's *Uncle Toby*, he would not have harmed the most intrusive and pertinacious 'fly,' but he would have concluded that in the world there was room for the fly to live and to enjoy itself—not less than for the minister and the professor of divinity.

Dr. Mitchell, if he had possessed amiability in smaller measure and of a less predominant kind, and if, instead of disarming wrath by gentleness, or of enduring and exhausting it with meek resignation and forgiveness, he had stood up ready to defy or to avenge it, would have had a far higher reputation for intellectual capacities and energies. These, though developed by varied and diligent culture, somehow seemed to be overshadowed and restricted by his emotional and moral developments. Though he had a quick and keen eye for the peculiarities of human character and life in all the grades and circles of society, he never became satirical, far less stoical ; but in spite of all his knowledge and discernment, he remained a Nathanael, as guileless as his Jewish prototype or his Selkirk predecessor. In the view of many, greatness is invariably *formidable* ; and Dr.

Mitchell's rare simplicity, goodness, and amiability prevented him from appearing formidable.

Immaculate virtue and exquisite amiability have been so seldom associated with intellectual power, that when they are found together in one individual, the intellectual constituent is either denied or greatly depreciated. An eminently good and tender-hearted man, though he possess a commanding mind, will seldom get credit for it from his neighbours; whereas it would have been duly recognised if he had been of sterner disposition and a more irascible mood, so that when smitten on the one cheek, instead of meekly turning the other to receive a similar share of punishment, he would have promptly smitten the assailant on both cheeks, probably more than once!

Goodness and gentleness, by repressing all manifestations of vengeance, too often wear an aspect of weakness. In one passage of *Paradise Lost*, Milton says—

‘ Abashed the devil stood, and felt  
How AWFUL goodness is ! ’

Yet, throughout the poem, his wicked angels, wherever they appear, look possessed of mightier strength than his holy angels, and his *Satan* is a far grander embodiment of power and of enduring and invincible will than his *Michael*. A single

lightning flash from the clouds seems to be far more potent than waves of light from the sun !

So, if there had been a slight infusion of pugnacity, sternness, sarcasm, or wrath ['holy anger,' or, as Milton calls it, the 'unsinning predominance of his anger'] into the disposition and temper of Dr. Mitchell, his intellect would have seemed to many far more powerful. The mingling of a drop or two of 'gall' with his rare amiability and meekness would have caused his intellect to spring up in new strength and with formidable energy. Yet who that had been familiar with him as he was, with the genial sensibilities that gave to his face as great a variety of expressions as other faces have while exhibiting all the passions and moods, and gave also to his voice such an ever-changing melody of tone as other voices have in representing all the sterner as well as the softer emotions, could have wished him to be other than he was ? Who, moreover, that was familiar with the substance and style of his pulpit discourses and Divinity Hall lectures, especially with his glowing exhibition of the genius of Christianity and the character of its Founder ; his fine criticism on the beauties and sublimities of Scripture poetry ; his vivid sketches of Church history and its memorable episodes ; his exquisite delineation of the virtues



and graces which Christianity inspires and requires, and his inimitable character-tributes paid to the memories of the most famous among his deceased brethren,—who that was familiar with the attractive individualities of his professorial course, could have wished for any change, least of all such a change as should have robbed Dr. Mitchell of his pure geniality?

The two professors of the United Secession Divinity Hall seemed to be admirable impersonations of justice and mercy,—Dr. Dick of the former, and Dr. Mitchell of the latter.

Dr. Mitchell was chosen Professor of Biblical Literature and Criticism on the 15th September 1825. The Synod decided that the five years' course, which was still, as formerly, prescribed to all that entered the Divinity Hall, should be thus arranged : for the first two years of their attendance at the Hall, students should be under the charge of Dr. Mitchell, and for the last three years under that of Dr. Dick. Both professors residing in Glasgow, where they had large congregations, the Hall was undivided so far as locality was concerned ; though there were two classes, the junior under the Professor of Biblical Literature, and the senior under the Professor of Systematic Theology.

For some years, when Dr. Dick was the sole

professor, the number of *first-year* students ranged from 33 to 36; and these, when joined by their fellow-students of the other *four* years, must have formed a very large class. Subsequently, for eight years, and down to the period of Dr. Dick's death, the number of *first-year* students somehow decreased, and kept near an average of 26. Still this number, added to that of the second-year students, must have formed a junior class of not fewer than 50, to receive instruction from Dr. Mitchell; and the senior class, made up of students that belonged to the remaining three years, must have ranged from 70 to 80, to be taught by Dr. Dick.

The Synod had designed that the students of the junior class should be required to read regularly and often passages from the Greek and the Hebrew Scriptures, and to have their knowledge of the two languages strictly tested by examinations. It had always been assumed that divinity students were able to translate the Greek New Testament at the opening of the book; and it had generally been found that the least scholarly could with a little help do this. The humblest Grecians might afterwards, with lexicon and grammar, look into the original of the particular text which they chose for a discourse, and discover—for some word or clause—a more faithful or felicitous rendering

than is furnished in the common version ; though almost all the great sermons that have ever been preached or published were founded and built upon that common version, and owed none of their originality or grand impressiveness to any changes which Greek scholarship made upon the translation.

But the knowledge of HEBREW by the students was far more limited, both as to its amount and as to the number of students who possessed that amount. Many knew little more than the letters ; and if, after their Hall period, they did not greatly advance, they might, for all practical purposes, have stood behind the Hebrew alphabet, and become ‘ a pillar of salt ’ in their first moment of studying the Hebrew grammar. Only a very few students got beyond the mere elements of grammar ; and they always needed the presence or the recollection of the English version to assist them either in translating or in parsing Hebrew words. Among them there seldom appeared a really good Hebrew scholar ; and a whisper ran that this would have been a *phenomenon* among professors. The fact that, instead of having such an extent and variety of literature in Hebrew as has been left in Greek and Latin, there is only one book—though this is the best and most important book in the whole world—seems to have acted in restricting and in

damping all enthusiasm for the thorough mastering of an ancient language which is the key to a single book—and not to a vast library!

At the time of his appointment to the Chair of Biblical Literature, Dr. Mitchell's acquirements in Greek and Hebrew might not have grown rusty; but, through the pressure of the daily onerous duties in connection with his large city congregation, they were likely to have been but slightly exercised. Yet, after he became professor, his extreme conscientiousness would lead him not only to renew, but to enlarge and deepen his acquaintance with those languages, in order that he might effectively stimulate and help his students to know them.

The members of the junior class were each session taken through considerable sections of Scripture in the original; but the amiable professor, in his examinations, often himself supplied the answers when the students were hesitating, or beginning to blunder. He was ever anxious to hide, instead of detecting, a student's ignorance, before he quietly enlightened it. He never doubted that all the verses of Hebrew prescribed had been duly studied by each of his pupils; and he had no suspicion, as he called them to be examined just in the order in which they sat in the class-room,

that each knew the Hebrew verse which would fall to be read by him, and that the majority had studied and could read no other verses than their own. The professor acted as if school-artifices and evasions could not be practised in the Divinity Hall, and as if the predominant care of those whom he taught, was *to be*, and not merely to *seem* to be, Hebrew scholars, who could read and parse the whole passage that had been fixed upon as the class-lesson. Often the translation was simply read from the *English* Bible, which lay open before the student who was being examined, while his muttered, mumbled attempts at pronouncing and parsing the Hebrew words appeared to the professor to be caused by bashfulness and feebleness of voice ; and forthwith the professor himself proceeded to do all the parsing and to answer his own questions.

The following 'bold stroke' for escaping from the Hebrew lesson was (within the writer's observation) adventured by a student, who, though distinguished for a powerful, versatile, and well-furnished intellect, had never turned it to the acquisition of a knowledge of Hebrew, but was satisfied with little more than the alphabet. In the class-room he sat near a large-boned, grim-looking student, who must have been considerably beyond

the age of thirty before he abandoned some manual occupation for a career of study. Our present purpose, however, does not lead us to say more of the latter than that he was subject to epileptic fits, and that, when these came upon him in the Hall, his companion, who was of strong *physique*, hastened to give assistance in carrying out the poor man to an adjoining room, where—if the Hebrew lesson had been going on—his recovery to consciousness was not held to be satisfactory until the last Hebrew text for the day was read and parsed.

The Hebrew lesson was circulating from student to student and from pew to pew, when our friend, counting the students that were between himself and the reader, and the number of verses that had still to be read, discovered, to his consternation, that a verse would fall to his share, and a very long and difficult verse too! He saw that there was no possibility of changing places with any fellow-students, with the view of changing or altogether evading his verse. He had an English Bible; but this would not help him either to pronounce or to parse the Hebrew words. He sat where no friendly whisper could guide him. He was left to his own resources, and these were supposed to be *nil*! Student after student sat down with

the professor's benignant approval—'Very well done ;' and the enemy was steadily approaching. What was to be done ?

In desperation he started up, sweeping books and hats from the bench ; and with both hands seized the epileptic student (who was then in no fit, but perfectly well), half-dragging, half-carrying out the astonished veteran, over whose brow he crushed down a hat with the aim of concealing the features that were neither flushed nor convulsed ! The cries of surprise, bewilderment, and anger which were uttered by the man who was thus violently laid hold of, were not unlike the sounds that had formerly come from him when he was in a fit ; but he was in powerful hands, that had been incalculably strengthened by desperation about the Hebrew lesson, that enabled him to deal with his fellow-student as Hebrew Samson did with the gates of Gaza ; and professor and students admired the prompt resolution and the irresistible vigour with which the ready friend bore away the struggling man !

'The episode had been extemporized by the athletic student for the purpose of escaping his Hebrew verse.

We fear that Dr. Mitchell was too amiable, gentle, and unsuspecting to secure that much of

his own Hebrew scholarship was communicated to his students. The few who sought to learn the language might catch his fine enthusiasm for its venerable structure and hallowed associations ; but the many closed each session, as they began it, in utter ignorance of the language, and without having acquired the means of ascertaining whether its 'oracles' had received their truest and most vivid expression in the common English version. Hebrew learning—even if regarded as a merely subsidiary department in divinity—has invariably met with too little attention ; and a moderate share ought to have been strictly exacted from every student. Probably the best guarantee for such a moderate standard of Hebrew learning being reached by all candidates for the ministry lies in making Hebrew literature one of the *leading* departments in theological study, and in having a professor wholly occupied with it.

Dr. Mitchell's lectures on the history, evidences, and interpretation of the Bible, and on sacred geography and chronology, though not systematic, had a fine order of their own, and were persuasive rather than forcible. The thinking and reasoning in them were really masculine, but their sentiment had a depth, tenderness, and delicacy altogether feminine, and feminine in the best sense ; and the



soft and earnest tones in which he read the lectures, while his face glowed with geniality and affection, caused masculine strength to be concealed under the texture of feminine grace.

For the training of the students, the calm clearness of Dr. Dick was blended with the genial glow of Dr. Mitchell; though, if a third element could have been added,—the brilliant blaze of Dr. Chalmers, the splendour of his imagination,—the privileges of the Secession Divinity Hall would have been still more complete. The appointment of a second professor had been found to be eminently advantageous in largely increasing the means of instruction, and in augmenting the training-influence provided for the students. Hence the ministers and the students of the United Secession Church often congratulated themselves—as well became them—on the entirely harmonious and admirably efficient labours of their two Glasgow professors; but, instead of considering how the peculiar gifts and qualifications of the twain might be supplemented by a new colleague, who should possess a high development of such faculties as were not prominent in either, they purposed to make an addition to the existing departments of Hall education. Some students, while appreciating the benefits they received from

Drs. Dick and Mitchell in the autumn, wisely availed themselves in winter of the privilege of being enlightened by the intensely ardent yet massive intellect of Dr. Chalmers, and of being profoundly stirred by his potent genius. We can scarcely even suppose, from among all the 'masters and princes in Israel' whom Scotland has ever produced, a more nobly qualified Faculty of Theology for the rearing of candidates for the ministry than Dick, Mitchell, and Chalmers! To what Dick and Mitchell were and did, Chalmers added powers and services that formed an invaluable complement to the divinity course. We fear that the Secession students who could and who did attend the theological lectures of Chalmers were not many; still, the privation suffered by those who had not their teaching by Dick and Mitchell completed and energized by Chalmers was not greater and more hurtful than was the privation endured by the Established Church students, who had not the teaching by Chalmers associated with, or preceded by, the characteristic instructions of Dick and Mitchell. Such a three in one Hall would have been a transcendently qualified 'Faculty' for training young men to the ministry.

Each of the two professors received, in addition

to the payment of preachers for their pulpits during their eight weeks of the Hall session, the salary of £100 per annum,—a sum which at first view would be decent only on the supposition that the professor's lectures were his sermons refurbished and docked of their flock-piercing 'ahs!' and 'ohs!' But at the period, and alongside of the general scale of ministers' stipends within the Secession Church, it was a remuneration not unhandsome, especially as it was considered to be the balance of the large sum which the professor had remitted, half on the score of duty and half on the score of honour.

But too soon, as well as unexpectedly, a heavy loss fell to be sustained by the Secession Church and her Divinity Hall in the death of Dr. Dick, after a very short illness, which had nearly run its swift course before his loving family feared any danger. He died on the 25th January 1833, in the sixty-ninth year of his age and in the thirteenth year of his professorship. Down to the day preceding that of his final change, he showed a physical frame unimpaired in vigour and elasticity, for time was only making it venerable and maturing his intellectual faculties, without causing any of these or of his varied acquirements to wither. He was far older in years than in either

his bodily or his mental constitution ; hence, to the very end, he was no stiffened, slow, and tottering guide to the many young men whom he had to conduct through the vast territory of systematic theology. Those who have seen in the Divinity Hall class-room the portrait which was taken of him at an earlier period, and which represents him in all the unblunted keenness, in all the undimmed clearness, in all the untouched force and alertness, and in all the unwasted freshness of his intellectual life, may be assured that 'SIC SEDEBAT,' in the very last session of his professorship, no image of weary and helpless eld sunk in the cushions of his chair ! He and his colleague Dr. Mitchell (who when appointed in 1825 was in the fifty-seventh year of his age), though considerably older than the majority of their predecessors had been, retained their vigour to the last, though we are far from adducing this as a reason why the Synod should decide against having young, if duly qualified, professors.

On Dr. Dick's death there was a general feeling throughout the Secession Church that the system of Divinity Hall tuition should be enlarged and improved. The Synod, at its April meeting, resolved to delay in the meantime the appointment of a successor, and remitted to a very large com-

mittee to consider what should be done, and to bring forward, at the Synod's autumn meeting, mature and definite proposals. This large committee, finding itself too unwieldy for the task, assigned it to a small sub-committee, of which Dr. John Brown (of Broughton Place Church, Edinburgh) was convener, and Dr. Adam Thomson (of Coldstream) was clerk. It was enjoined upon the members of this sub-committee, that on being summoned to attend its meetings, they should make arrangements for devoting two or three consecutive days to the business of those meetings. These began towards the end of May, and were repeatedly held through the summer. The clerk and the convener laid before the committee minute information which they had obtained about the course of study and the method of instruction followed in the various seminaries, Scottish, English, and American, that were engaged in training candidates for the ministry. The whole subject of theological tuition seems to have been carefully discussed, under all the lights which they could obtain from the experience of other institutions. Dr. Brown drew up a report of the views and conclusions arrived at; and the document was sanctioned both by the small and by the large committee, and, on being laid before the Synod, was

highly applauded and substantially adopted. It recommended the creation of new professorships, and by clearly defining the peculiar province and functions of each of these—old as well as new—removed all grounds for the complaint which several Presbyteries had made,—that though all the professors of the Secession Divinity Hall had been eminent for talents, learning, and piety, as well as for the success with which they had taught and trained their students, still they had in succession pursued entirely different plans of teaching. The report clearly traced the general outlines and the special features of a scheme to which all professors might be required to conform.

The practical issue of all the committee, Presbyterial, and Synodical deliberations at this time upon Divinity Hall tuition was that, after appointing a successor to Dr. Dick in the Chair of Systematic Theology, two new professorships, one for Exegetical Theology and the other for Pastoral Theology and Church History, were instituted.

At the April meeting of the Synod in 1834, the Rev. Alexander Duncan of Mid-Calder was elected to the Chair of Systematic Theology, the Rev. Robert Balmer of Berwick-on-Tweed to the Chair of Pastoral Theology, and the Rev. Dr. John Brown to the Chair of Exegetical Theology.

[It will prevent confusion if we henceforth, in mentioning these professors, anticipate and ante-date the University honours which were conferred on them, and call them *Doctors*.] Looking at Dr. Balmer by himself, and without any reference to competitors, some surprise may be felt that he should have been appointed to teach *pastoral* instead of *systematic* theology; for, as his friends knew, his talents and his studies had peculiarly fitted him to excel in the latter department. But then Dr. Duncan also had high claims for the Chair of Systematic Theology,—large and various learning, and a remarkable faculty for system-building. He carried in his head plans for all that was known and for all that was knowable, and he could produce them at a moment's notice. Like Dr. Balmer, he, by his studies and the whole bent of his mind, was better fitted for systematic than for pastoral theology—though to the latter, with all its details of ordinances, functions, spheres, and agencies, which had always been arranged arbitrarily and in mere parts and corners at a time, he gave an order that was admirable for its comprehensiveness, thoroughness, and harmony.

Subsequently, by an arrangement between Dr. Balmer and Dr. Duncan, an exchange of chairs, which the Synod sanctioned, took place; and Dr.

Balmer took that of systematic theology, while Dr. Duncan took that of pastoral theology.

By the Synod's arrangement, the students were divided into two classes, a junior and a senior class,—the junior consisting of students during the first two years of their divinity course, and the senior consisting of students during the last three years of that course. The\* junior class was to be taught by Drs. Mitchell and Brown; the senior by Drs. Balmer and Duncan. While the senior class was always to meet in Edinburgh, the junior was to meet alternately in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The four departments of theology were exactly on one level, and the four professors held the same rank. In Dr. Dick's term, the Chair of Systematic Theology had a pre-eminence which was neither formally nor indeed consciously accorded to it by the great majority of Secession ministers, who regarded Dr. Dick as the *primarius professor* of divinity; but this was entirely in consequence of the Doctor's rare qualifications and reputation as a theologian, though the distinction was wholly without Synodical sanction, and existed only in the sentiments of admiring ministers and students. Henceforth it disappeared, even as an imaginary distinction; and the four professors stood on a platform as level as the most fastidious Presby-



terianism could desire. No official *status*, however, though adjusted in conformity with the strictest Presbyterian parity, can prevent any differences in the *intellectual stature* from disclosing themselves ; and indeed the simple fact of individuals standing on the very same level is all the more favourable to an observation and measurement of the heights which they respectively reach.

At the time of the election of the three new professors, Dr. Balmer was in the forty-sixth year of his age, Dr. Brown in the fiftieth, and Dr. Duncan in the fifty-sixth. Of one and all of them it could be truly affirmed, that sixteen years earlier they had acquired their distinctive and eminent qualifications for their Divinity Hall functions. The period of life fixed upon for the Jewish priests beginning and closing their sacred career might have been most advantageously applied to the Secession professors ; and this would have secured their services when they were in the fulness of their vigour and energy, and in the freshness of their sympathies.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> With the light which we *now* have upon the capacities of the men of 1834 we might have asked in astonishment, Why the REV. HENRY ANGUS of Aberdeen was not by acclamation placed in one of the Professorships,—if there had not been a previous question, to be put with still greater surprise, ‘Why was he never once named by the Synod? The answer is, that he was known to only a few, and these but imperfectly knew the genius and culture which raised him above nearly all his brethren of that period.

## 230 *The United Presbyterian Divinity Hall.*

For some years after the enlargement of the Divinity Hall tuition in 1834, the number of *first-year* students increased considerably, and continued to increase. In the first session after the appointment of the three new professors, the junior class, conducted by Dr. Mitchell and his new colleague, Dr. John Brown, was entered by *thirty-one* new students ; in the second session by *thirty-five* ; in the third session by *thirty-nine* ; in the fourth session by *forty* ; and ecclesiastical observers began to dread that an unexampled over-supply of licentiates was impending. But the limit had been reached at *forty* ; and in the following session the number rebounded back to *twenty-nine*, then to *twenty-six*, then to *twenty-one* ; and after rising slightly, went down in 1844 to *sixteen* first-year students.

The causes either of the increase or of the decrease cannot now, if they ever could, be positively ascertained. The influence and celebrity of Dr. John Brown as a master and teacher of Biblical exegesis, and the triumphant progress which the Voluntary cause was at the time making, may have contributed to bring about an increase in the number of first-year students ; and the universal interest which the Disruption crisis within the Church of Scotland attracted may have had to do with the subsequent decrease of first-year

students at the Secession Divinity Hall ; still there might be other contemporary causes in operation which had a weightier and more direct bearing.

Dr. John Brown in the Chair of Exegetical Theology was indeed a great power, a great attraction, and a great success. Both as a preacher and a professor, he possessed several external advantages, one or two of them in a remarkable degree. His form was of perfect symmetry and grace ; and his face, while indicating the mental capacity and energy, the emotional force, and the decisive will, of manhood, had a beauty of features, texture, and complexion, that might have been called feminine, but for the masculine power and keenness which pervaded all its expressions. His reading and elocution gave a new force and vividness to all that came from his lips, and would have animated the most commonplace ideas and very tame sentiments. What was really impressive he made doubly so by his emphatic articulation, and by such intensely impassioned tones as thrilled the soul of each hearer, and long haunted his memory. When he was calm his voice might have too much monotony, and when he was excited it might have little of melody ; but it never lacked a power that shot through the intellectual into the moral nature,

though it might leave nice ears ungratified by musical cadences, and rather offended by shrill and piercing sounds.

In his Hall lectures, instead of laying down and expounding the principles and the method of such an exegesis as should be applied to the interpretation of the various books of Scripture, he proceeded to embody and exemplify them in lengthy specimens of interpretation. He gave the exegesis of several of the Apostle Paul's most elaborate epistles. Unquestionably, the example which he set of bringing out from any particular passage in the word of God its *proper meaning*, and no other, and of finding in that passage the peculiar truth which the inspired writer had placed there, and no other truth, however important and scriptural, has had a far-reaching and most salutary influence. He long bore away the palm as a reverently exact interpreter of Scripture; and indeed he was the first, and for several years the only exegetical divine in Britain.

His students felt how interesting it was to follow the professor as he was making his way through a difficult and obscure passage of Scripture. He fixed his light in a few words which were standing here and there, until the whole length and breadth of the passage were illuminated; and the guide

then became the teacher, descanting solemnly on the things that had been disclosed. Even plain texts, such as did not seem to need any elucidation from criticism, had the beauty and force of their meaning more precisely and delicately pointed out, so that the effect was heightened.

Yet the strictly exegetical tendencies which Dr. Brown had acquired, marred to some extent his character as a doctrinal lecturer. He kept expounding a phrase when he ought to have been stating and establishing a truth. He often dealt more elaborately and earnestly with the grammar than with the thought of a passage. He never overlooked the *sense*; but he did sometimes miss the full *significance*. His critical had outgrown his theological habits, so that on several occasions his disquisitions were more minute than comprehensive. Repeatedly, when he was getting into a train of profound thought or of fine sentiment, he was checked by some exegetical tendency, which brought him up to the phraseology,—the mere surface of the text.

What high and peculiar merits his Hall lectures possessed, may easily be discovered by a perusal of the volumes which he published towards the close of his life; but their potent and extensive influence, who can estimate or measure?

His criticism upon students' discourses invariably gave a skilful exegesis of their texts, but in reference to the juvenile preaching, fell into one out of three or four carefully prepared moulds. His first sentence indicated whether he meant to condemn ; and the exact terms of the forthcoming reprobation could be anticipated. If the special meaning of a text had been elucidated by a student, who yet had displayed no superior abilities, the professor's emphatic eulogy, and the very words in amplification of 'well done,' could have been repeated before the professor opened his lips.

The criticism lacked such a freshness and elasticity as suited the variety and individuality of the discourses. The three or four judgments were considerably too few for the forty or fifty discourses to which they were forcibly fitted ; yet of very high intellectual merit he had a quick and sure appreciation, even when he censured with superfluous wrath some exegetical shortcomings.

With what delight and enthusiasm was he wont in his own house to read to a student or minister some splendid passage from Milton's prose, or from the works of a more modern author—his tones swelling and his looks brightening under its inspiration !

We pass to the two new professors in the senior class of the Divinity Hall.

Dr. Balmer, both when a student under Dr. Lawson, and in the early years of his Berwick pastorate, was regarded by all his friends and acquaintances as possessed not only of high talents, but of such scholarship and methodized information as had imparted to his mind a rich culture. That mind was marked neither by originality of thinking nor by the native vigour of its various faculties; yet it had high tendencies, which had been carefully developed, and which, through the purity and simplicity of his heart and his moral nature, had neither been repressed nor perverted; and those tendencies had carried him up into the sphere which was consecrated by the independent speculations and original thoughts of other men, and had given him an intense appreciation of and sympathy with the noblest productions of human genius that revered God. Some of his contemporaries were wont to suspect that his admiration of the talents and learning of the Secession 'Fathers' and leaders was not sufficiently strong; but this arose from the incomparably stronger admiration which his whole nature yielded to the earlier and brighter luminaries in theology which had shone in England.

On a first view, Dr. Balmer's personal appearance gave the impression that he had only a very com-

mon share—if he had even so much—of intellectual ability. The superficial observer noticed a small and far from shapely head, with a decisively retreating brow, that formed an ‘incline’ from the eyebrows to the top of the head where phrenologists place the bump of ‘self-esteem,’ and that suggested a doubt as to how the professor could wear a hat ; while the face, with ‘lack-lustre’ eyes that often seemed less inquisitive than the very prominent nose between them, sometimes had a blank expression. His rather tall and lank person was the reverse of graceful, either in its proportions or in its movements. In the pulpit his chief gesticulation was a continual twisting of his long neck ; and when walking along the streets—each pace a stride that measured off a good yard and a half—you had the idea, not that he commanded and employed his limbs, but that his limbs had broken loose from his sway and were running off with him.

But, on a closer and more searching gaze, all homeliness and ungainliness were transfigured, and his features were lighted up by a quietly thoughtful and most saintly expression. When, in the professor’s chair, he was descanting on the favourite themes that dilated while they thrilled and overawed his heart and imagination,—on one



of God's attributes ; on the incarnation, sufferings, death, or ascension of Jesus Christ ; on the millenium, or on heaven's far more blessed eternity,—his glowing countenance gave an illumination to his ideas. His voice had then a solemn roll and a grand swell, with most impressive cadences ; and though none of them were according to art, they came from the depths of his nature, and at once found their way to the nature of his hearers. He had a primitive and—as in our day it would be reckoned—a very rude style of inflexion, that 'circumnavigated' the clauses of a sentence ; yet it was singularly effective,—more so in the classroom than in a large church. We have heard him in the class-room read the vivid description of a night-vision that occurs in the book of Job with such startling power as no elocutionist could surpass. His voice and all its tones were completely without passion ; yet they had an earnestness and a solemnity which were not less potent in fixing the attention and ruling the thoughts and feelings of an audience.

In his lectures Dr. Balmer did not deal with all the truths that make up systematic theology ; more than the half was left blank, to be filled in by examinations, in which he tersely and without illustrations discussed every omitted doctrine.

The parts of the system on which he did lecture were admirably handled, so as to convince the understanding and to impress the imagination and the heart. He neither walked in the footsteps of Dr. Dick, nor, on the other hand, sought ostentatiously to keep at a distance from the track of his forerunner. Dr. Balmer's lectures would have been what they were if Dr. Dick's had neither been written nor printed. The former has different methods of elucidating and supporting his doctrines; and the fine analysis from nature with which he interweaves them, and the exquisite sentiments with which he freshens them, are all his own,—at least, are unborrowed from Dr. Dick. His intellect, however, lacked the completeness and the symmetry of Dr. Dick's; nor could he have represented the whole system of Christian theology, assigning with such exquisite adjustment their places, proportions, and functions to all the parts and details.

In his criticism upon students' discourses, Dr. Balmer was eminently candid; yet was obviously much more pleased when he was permitted to praise than when he felt constrained to censure. Juvenile excess of ornament or glare of colouring did not make him angry, but drew from him a smile, which, however, did not say 'Well done' to

the ambitious preacher. He encouraged students to criticize each other's sermons; but, except occasionally when a senior student offered some remarks, the professor's was the only judgment. Sometimes the student-critic indulged in a severer strain than the professor sanctioned; and the severity, while it did far less good than if it had come from the professor, left in the student-preacher's mind wounds that rankled longer and more deeply.

Dr. Alexander Duncan, the other professor of the senior class of the Divinity Hall, had a very compact, neat, and trim appearance. He was of rather less than the middle stature, and had a well-built frame, while his comely face had regular features that wore a mild but firm expression; and his head, with its straight and square brow, looked fully packed. But he had one physical disadvantage, — a feeble, muffled, and indistinct utterance, — an utterance which received but equivocal help for the lips from the nostrils. The most imperious and fiery oratory could not have burst through such obstructions; and what was more unfortunate, original ideas and valuable trains of thought were, in passing through Dr Duncan's 'door of utterance,' deprived of a great part of their interest, and sometimes of much of

their intelligibility, to those who had not been long accustomed to listen to him, and had become familiar with sounds which we may venture to call *hieroglyphic*. Members of his Mid-Calder congregation had come to receive high profit and delight in hearing him. Some of his students, too, far more quickly than others were initiated into his manner, and could appreciate the stores of digested learning and the clear and comprehensive views which it conveyed. A few even got to like the manner in itself; and after the professor had been attacked by paralysis, and when his son—the Rev. David Duncan of Howgate—read his lectures, they found them less interesting and instructive than from the father's own lips.

For many years, the ministers who admired the preaching of the Rev. Dr. James Henderson of Galashiels—and who not more fervently than justly praised his discourses for their rich and varied ideas, their fine sentiment, their beautiful imagery, and their exquisite literary style—were wont to express deep regret that such discourses should be grievously marred by the Doctor's slow and monotonous delivery. They also expressed a strong desire that he should be prevailed on to publish a volume of discourses—so that these might appear in their native brightness and beauty,

unspoiled by his dull elocution. Yet when a volume of his select sermons had been issued, his many ministerial admirers confessed that the peculiar delivery which, in their past view, had marred Dr. Henderson's preaching, was really one of its many fascinations, and had enhanced all the others !

So some of the students, on hearing Professor Duncan's lectures read by the clear and articulate voice of his son, imagined them to be less profound and interesting than when given by himself.

Dr. Duncan's lectures were marked by unusual erudition, and by a speculative power which took a comprehensive range, for his view of 'pastoral theology' included much of systematic theology—indeed all the cardinal doctrines ; though, instead of making systematic theology a mere satellite of pastoral theology, he caused the former to fall into and become a constituent part of the latter. The second division of his course, consisting of lectures to those students who were attending his class in the second session, gave views of the mode of 'ministerially exhibiting the mind of the Spirit, or proclaiming and inculcating the truth.' Under this, after furnishing an admirably sagacious and sound exposition of pastoral duties, his genius for a comprehensive survey carried him into exegetical

theology, where he laid down a series of principles and rules for the interpretation of Scripture. His third division took an equally wide sweep around the Church,—her ordinances and sacraments, her government and communion, the rights of Church members, the power of Church office-bearers, etc. etc.; and all these were shown in their mutual relation, and in their relation to the system, with masterly effect.

Unfortunately, his literary style was wanting, not in force, but in grace and clearness, and did scanty justice to his remarkable faculties, both of theological generalization and of theological analysis. Nobody could fail to be struck with the manifestation of those faculties in his own syllabus of his course of Hall lectures; and if these lectures had only been written in a terse and perspicuous style, they would have been a valuable legacy to the theological world. It is mentioned by his filial biographer, that after he was seized with paralysis, whenever he happened to pause for a phrase, the Latin language gave him a prompter and better supply than the English; and certainly, even in his days of health, his writing of English was not free from Latinized constructions. In his intercourse with students, his demeanour had manly dignity, yet winning ease; and his conversation was

graphic and genial, and abounded in racy reminiscences, which, whether they were anecdotes or sketches, owed none of their brightness to their frequent circulation, for they were fresh from the professor's own observation or memory.

At the Synod meeting in May 1842, both Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Duncan petitioned that for the ensuing session—they being unable—substitutes should be appointed for conducting their Hall classes. This was done by the appointment of a committee of ministers for Dr. Mitchell's class in Glasgow, and of another for Dr. Duncan's class in Edinburgh.

In the following year (1843), at the meeting of Synod, the Rev. Drs. Mitchell and Duncan resigned their professorships; and a day or two afterwards the Synod appointed the Rev. Dr. James Harper of Leith to the Chair of Pastoral Theology, and the Rev. Dr. John Eadie of Glasgow to the Chair of Biblical Literature. The two venerable men who retired did not long survive the laying aside of their functions.

In the midsummer of the next year, the Church and the Divinity Hall were called suddenly to sustain another heavy loss, in the death of Dr. Balmer.

We have not judged it expedient to do more

than simply here allude to the charges of unsound doctrine that had been for some years brought against Drs. Balmer and Brown, and that were forthwith renewed against the surviving professor,—but renewed only to be swept away decisively. The atonement controversy, that raged for a time within the United Secession Church, looks *small* under the baleful shadow of that sceptical rationalism which was then beginning to try an entrance into all British Churches, with the aim of assailing the inspiration of the Bible, and all that was supernatural in the system of Christianity or in the history of Jesus Christ. The fight between the so-called ‘old views’ and ‘new views’ about the extent of the atonement, which the leaders of the Free Church dexterously prevented from spreading beyond the United Presbyterian Church into their own, was too trivial to become historical, especially in the light of that German scepticism which soon began here to manifest both its character and its aim.

In 1846 the Synod transferred Dr. Harper from the Chair of Pastoral Theology to that of Systematic Theology, though this change was like asking a man who excelled in painting to devote himself henceforth to sculpture, or a professor of Greek to undertake the teaching of Hebrew.



There were now only three professors for the Secession Divinity Hall ; but arrangements were in steady and unresisted progress for a union between the Secession and the Relief Churches next year, when those three professors would be augmented by two from the Relief Divinity Hall. Providence showed to the normal and sacred number of *four* no such superstitious attachment as the Secession long cherished, but added and subtracted with but little ceremony. That attachment, which was maintained though it involved the sacrifice of many invaluable advantages, is now abandoned, for the Synod has boldly resolved on having *six* professors, and on the startling novelty of giving to these a principal !

## CHAPTER VII.

1824-1847.

A glance back to the origin of the Relief Church—Relief students trained for the ministry in the Theological Halls of the Established Church until 1824—Formation of the Relief Divinity Hall—The Rev. Dr. James Thomson of Paisley appointed its first professor—His death in 1841—The Rev. Drs. M'Michael and Lindsay chosen professors—The Relief Divinity Hall, as taught by Rev. Drs. Thomson, M'Michael, and Lindsay, at Paisley and Glasgow.

IN 1752 the RELIEF CHURCH had its origin in the unconstitutional deposition of the Rev. THOMAS GILLESPIE of Carnock, for refusing to take part in the intrusion of a presentee upon the parish of Inverkeithing, in spite of the people's strenuous resistance and emphatic protests. Both the local Presbytery and the provincial Synod had shown themselves unwilling to assist or to sanction that intrusion ; but the General Assembly, more than ever intolerant of clerical and of popular opposition to patronage, determined to violate the tender conscience of those ministers who had stood aloof from the forced settlement, and to compel them to

‘lay their hands suddenly’ upon the man who was the patron’s choice, but was also the rejected of the people. The Assembly (which was sitting) was resolved that the whole scandalous case should be disposed of—the ordination effected by reluctant hands, or exemplary punishment inflicted upon the scrupulous members who dared to disobey—before the annual gathering was broken up; gave peremptory orders that the Presbytery (of Dunfermline) should meet at Inverkeithing in the course of two days to ordain the presentee; that all the members of Presbytery should attend; that the necessary quorum should be *five* instead of *three*; and that on the day following that of the Inverkeithing meeting, all the members of Presbytery should appear at the bar of the Assembly, to report their obedience or their disobedience! Despotism in words, to be swiftly followed by despotism in deeds!

On the day fixed it was reported to the General Assembly that only three members had met at Inverkeithing, and that, being too few for the quorum appointed, they had separated without attempting the ordaining commission. Several of their brethren offered such excuses for their absence as were sustained; but six members—including Thomas Gillespie—who gave the valid

reason of their conscientious objections to the Inverkeithing settlement, forthwith found themselves exposed to the pitiless storm of the Assembly's wrath ! Conscience, as originating either an active or even a merely passive resistance to an Assembly order or regulation, was incomprehensible—at least unsatisfactory and unwelcome—to the Assembly. Treating the new ecclesiastical offence as a court-martial would have dealt with a military mutiny, the Supreme Court decided that one of the six should be sacrificed, but allowed them all to be for a whole night in ignorance and suspense as to who should be the 'scapegoat,' that all might tremble and be prepared to take warning. Next day, the vengeance provoked by the six fell upon Thomas Gillespie ; and 'in the name of the Lord Jesus,' this man of sterling piety and worth, who had been guilty of nothing that deserved the slightest censure, was at once ejected from his ministry and benefice. He meekly, and with heroism none the less noble because it was gentle, received the sentence, allowing it full effect so far as the Established Church was concerned ; but as his people followed him out from that Church, and showed that they would devotedly adhere to his ministry and his fortunes, he preached to them in the fields until a com-

modious 'meeting-house' was built for him in Dunfermline.

This was the origin of 'Relief,'—an origin that was singularly honourable to its founder, and worthy to be remembered with fond reverence by all who subsequently belonged to the Relief communion; but extremely disgraceful to the Church and the churchmen that had 'in the name of Jesus Christ' been Gillespie's merciless persecutors. The Tory Government for a time refused to permit the slightest record of what the Church did to Gillespie to appear on the tombstone which is now being raised to him.

In the course of five years Mr. Gillespie was joined by the Rev. Thomas Boston, son and namesake of the well-known author of the *Fourfold State*, who had felt the law of patronage, as recently administered by the despotic Assembly, to be intolerable, with no prospect of relaxation. In 1757 he announced to the Established Church Presbytery of Jedburgh his secession from 'all the judicatures of the Church of Scotland;' and he then accepted a call from Jedburgh to be pastor of a large congregation that had just withdrawn from the parish church there, in consequence of the persistent intrusion of an utterly unpopular presentee.

The two ministers did not meet in a Presbyterial capacity until the month of October 1761, when at Colinsburgh (Fife), a congregation which had left the parish church of Kilconquhar at the time of the intrusion of a candidate who had few but the patron on his side, was assembled to have a scripturally chosen and called pastor inducted into his duties in connection with the new body of Separatists. In the evening, the ministers of the three congregations [at Dunfermline, Jedburgh, and Colinsburgh], along with an elder from each, met, and solemnly yet simply constituted themselves into the RELIEF PRESBYTERY. They were shortly afterwards joined by the Rev. Mr. Bain, of the High Church of Paisley, who resigned his important charge in the National Church, and cast in his lot with the Relief brethren.

We'll refrain from tracing the progress, steady and far from slow, which the Relief cause subsequently made, and which soon raised flourishing congregations in principal towns over all the country and in many rural villages. That progress neither interfered with nor abated the rapid extension of the two Secession Churches—the Burgher and the Anti-Burgher—which, as soon as they had struck their roots, sent their branches abroad, and showed a greater increase than if the

‘Breach’ of 1747 had not happened. There was ample room for the growth and energy, as there had been cogent justification for the origin, of all the three.

The Church of Scotland, with Dr. Robertson now ‘in the saddle,’ was riding rough-shod over popular rights and privileges, and over the tender consciences of evangelical ministers, in her administration of the patronage law, and in her robbing the subordinate courts of their due power, in order that she might centralize it into a despotism within the General Assembly, which was wielded with utter recklessness. The Secession and the Relief Churches were largely indebted for their rapid extension to the reign and policy of that famous churchman, who gave to Moderatism the special function of emptying many parish sanctuaries.

The *Relief* Fathers acted wisely, and with just views of Christian freedom for themselves and their followers, in declining to be entangled and burdened with COVENANTING, and in dispensing with the ‘strait gate’ and the many thorny fences before and around it for securing a close communion ; yet it may be doubted if such a freedom did not, for a generation or two, restrict and retard, instead of advancing, the success of the *Relief* cause, since the serious and pious classes of that narrow-minded

period were strongly prejudiced in favour of those unnecessary encumbrances.

The Relief Church differed from the Secession in having, for nearly seventy years, no Divinity Hall of its own ; but the students who aspired to the ministry in connection with the *Relief* got their theological instruction in the Halls of the Church of Scotland,—the Divinity Halls of our Scottish Universities,—though simultaneously they were under the superintendence of Relief Presbyteries, and were regularly subjected to strict examinations. This arrangement was calculated to prevent, in the minds of those students, the formation of a duly strong attachment to the denomination of which they were members, and of which they sought to be ministers. On the supposition that a Church has ample warrant for its separate existence, it is plain that all its members, and especially those who are also to be its ministers, should have an ardent affection and zeal for it, and not merely a bare preference of it above other Churches ; yet the attendance of Relief students at an Established Church Divinity Hall was fitted to keep their sympathies, views, and interests suspended between the two Churches, or too strongly drawn to the Church which their fathers had left, and which had with cruel tyranny expelled Thomas



Gillespie. We say nothing of the defective and otherwise questionable theology that sometimes proceeded from the divinity chairs, not less than from the pulpits, of the Established Church, and was more or less likely to corrupt the faith of susceptible youth ; while too often it must have been a scanty nutriment for the evangelical preaching that was expected from Relief pulpits, and for the seasonable consolations and the rich assurances of divine grace and support which Relief pastors would be called to tender in the house of mourning and beside the bed of the dying ! Relief Presbyteries could do much in their superintendence of students ; and, as might be affirmed of the Presbyteries of all other Churches, they could have done much more than they have ever achieved or even attempted ; but they should never have been required to correct and counteract the theological education which those students received.

We believe, indeed, that if all Presbyterian Churches now in Scotland—the Established, the Free, and the United Presbyterian—would consent to have and to equip *but one Divinity Hall* for all the students belonging to them,—a Hall completely unsectarian in its constitution, management, and teaching,—incomparably nobler and better means for the teaching and training of candidates for the

ministry would be secured than by each of the Churches having a separate Divinity Hall. Few, if any, of our Churches have singly six or seven first-rate men to constitute a grandly equipped Theological Faculty, and to fill each of the several professorships with the highest representative. The United Presbyterian Church would contribute her two greatest men in original ability and manifold acquirements ; the Free Church her three or four ; and the Established Church her four or five ; and then there would be such a group of professors as none of the three Churches can separately furnish. Why should not the theological course, like the literary and the philosophical, be taught in the same place and by the same men to the students of all the three Churches ? And then each of these Churches could provide itself with an examining and a licensing board from its own Presbyteries, to give its own students the proper denominational stamp. If this plan had been *at present* practicable, it would, we do not hesitate to affirm, have been far superior to any possible enlargement and improvement of the separate Divinity Hall system.

The majority of the Relief students attended the Theological Hall of Glasgow University ; yet when they withdrew to the denominational seminary that was organized for them, the Glasgow *Senatus*, as

gracefully as justly, conferred the degree of D.D. on Mr. Thomson of Paisley, the first Relief professor.

At various stages of the history of the Relief Church, the institution of a Divinity Hall had been urged, but urged in vain. At length, the strange and unworthy treatment which Relief students were beginning to experience in the Established Church Halls both in Glasgow and in Aberdeen, and the still more churlish and inhospitable treatment which new regulations of the General Assembly threatened to introduce, compelled the Relief Synod to think of providing, from its own ministers, a competent professor. There were signs abroad that the Church of Scotland was about to shut her Divinity Halls against the admission of Relief and other Dissenting students, unless these should consent to join her communion ; and it was high time to take the warning, and to provide that there should be excellent means of theological instruction for Relief students, not only before the Church of Scotland could have locked up her education from them, but also in absolute indifference as to what she might do in the matter. Let Relief students have their own Divinity Hall, and, with their backs to the Halls of the Established Church, they would scorn to ask whether the doors of these Halls were open or shut for them,—nay,

the Established Church might refrain from committing herself to the odious and contemptible policy of locking up her learning from Dissenting students, and yet be assured that the Relief students would never again seek access to it.

In 1823 the Relief Synod adopted an overture, which was supported by a petition from twenty-five Relief students, for the appointment of a Professor of Theology, and nominated a committee to prepare the constitution of the denominational Divinity Hall.

The Rev. James Thomson — afterwards Dr. Thomson — of Paisley, was elected professor; and the Relief Divinity Hall was opened for an exceptionally short session on the 14th September 1824, with nineteen students, some of whom belonged to each of the four sessions which constituted the theological *curriculum* prescribed by the Synod.

Though coming from the Theological Halls of our Scottish Universities to the new Relief Divinity Hall, the students neither had, nor could have, the experience of passing from a superior to an humble course of tuition. Professor Thomson had high ability, learning, and culture; and in his habits, disposition, and manners he had remarkable aptitude for teaching and training young candidates for the ministry. His methods of instruction had

a general resemblance to those that had been long followed in the Secession Halls ; there were lectures on systematic and pastoral theology, examinations, Greek and Hebrew readings ; and Professor Thomson introduced some new exercises borrowed from the theological academies of English Dissent.

He took the *Westminster Confession of Faith* for his text-book, dividing it into four portions, and lecturing upon each in succession during the four sessions of the course. Students were required to discuss, in short essays, all the subjects of theological study ; and the essays, along with weekly exercises on topics selected by the professor, were submitted to his inspection and correction. He desired that they should thus acquire a facility in giving clear views of Christian doctrine, and in arraying the evidences and arguments which could best support it, as well as the illustrations which might animate and brighten it. At one of the Hall hours on Monday, each student was expected to give a full yet concise report of the Sunday discourses to which he had listened,—an exercise which, if it had been followed during the last ten or twelve years in the Divinity Hall of the United Presbyterian Church, would have brought the sermons of Dr. Robert Wallace—so remarkable for their intellectual and moral incisiveness—promi-

nently before the astonished professors, who would have found what a large proportion of the students had strayed away not only from their congregational, but from their denominational 'pastures,' and indulged in what was called 'promiscuous hearing.' Students have long been supposed to have an unwritten permission to wander from preacher to preacher within their own Church, with the rather professional aim of obtaining lessons or gleaning hints in effective pulpit eloquence ; and the licence has been held to extend to the regular breaking through of denominational fences, and the forming of a beaten footpath to Old Greyfriars. As the session is henceforth to stretch over five months, it may be proposed that the divinity students' privilege of wandering from church to church shall be considerably curtailed ; but the spirit of the age is against a 'boring of the ear' to any particular church-door.

Professor Thomson's lectures on the various duties of the pastorate were cast into a conversational form, and were full of the most sagacious advices, offered in a genial and affectionate spirit. His directions were at once comprehensive and minute, and being eminently practical, they were long remembered. His engrossing aim was to furnish his pupils thoroughly for a diligent and effective ministry ; and in addition to his class-

room instructions, he gave them, when he had them in successive groups around him in his own house, many hints regarding their deportment as probationers and as ordained pastors.

We cannot say whether or not Dr. Thomson subjected his students to any rhetorical and elocutionary drill (though this both belongs to Divinity Hall training, and is a highly important part of it); but it is an undoubted fact that more of the Relief ministers who had been educated in the Paisley Hall were pulpit orators, than could be found in the same numerical proportion within any other Scottish Church. Generally, those Relief ministers might not be superior to those of the Secession in intellect or in learning, but they were superior in the art of powerful and attractive speaking. They attended more to the cultivation and management of their voice, modulating its tones; so that if the Relief preacher and the Secession preacher had been called to address to an audience the same discourse, the former would have delivered it with far more of fluent and graceful energy.

Before the second session, a Hall library had, by the care of the Synod, begun to be formed, and it annually received large additions.

To many of the students, Paisley—the seat of the Relief Divinity Hall—had a strong charm, from

many interesting associations. Those students who had attended the moral philosophy class taught in Edinburgh College by Professor John Wilson, and who were familiar with the displays of his versatile genius in *Blackwood*, delighted to see Wilson's birth-place, and the scenes that first awakened in him his poetic passion for nature.

The number of Professor Thomson's students rose from nineteen in the session of 1824, to thirty-seven in 1825, there being in the latter session no fewer than sixteen first-year students. The number alternately rose and fell a little, until in 1839 there were thirty-eight students; and in 1840 (a session made slightly memorable by the students presenting to the professor a pair of gold spectacles) there were forty-four. The session was still more memorable, because it turned out to be the last of Dr. Thomson's valuable professorship. The venerable man died in 1841, some months before the next session of the Hall, in the seventeenth year of his professorship; and the forty-four students who met in the autumn of 1841 had the deceased professor's lectures read to them by the Rev. W. Beckett, while the class-examinations and the Greek and Hebrew readings were conducted by the Rev. G. Brooks.

At a special meeting of the Relief Synod on



2d November 1841, the Rev. Messrs. [afterwards Drs.] William Lindsay of Glasgow and Neil M'Michael of Dunfermline were appointed to the two chairs of theology which the Synod had decided should succeed the single chair so long adorned by Dr. Thomson. The seat of the Hall was henceforth fixed at Glasgow.

The Relief Church seems to have felt much earlier than did the Secession (both the Burgher and the Anti-Burgher) that 'it was not good' for a theological professor 'to be alone,' and that he ought to have a partner for his cares and labours. It took more than eighty years to convince the Secession that 'two were better than one,' or at least that there was enough of genuine work and honour to be divided between two professors; whereas an experience of seventeen years satisfied the Relief, and led to the adoption of a double professorship.

Nor are we surprised that the Divinity Hall of every body of Scottish Separatists from the Establishment had originally, and for a more or less prolonged term, a single professorship; and neither from a scarcity of able or learned men to fill more chairs, nor from a lack of revenue to pay them. What the King of England said on hearing of the death of Earl Percy at Chevy Chace—that he had

hundreds of knights in his realm as gallant as the fallen leader—could have been repeated with a measure of truth by each of those Churches ; for each had among its ministers not a few men capable of rivalling the one professor-elect, and it could easily have provided such an humble increase to their ministerial stipends as would have contented the claims of additional professors for remuneration,—a little more of the native ‘oat-meal,’ on which theologians, as well as poets and literary men, were wont to thrive !

But when it is remembered that all the students who were to be taught theology at the Hall had from childhood been trained, like Timothy, to be familiar with the Scriptures ; and had also, unlike Timothy, been made acquainted with a fully articulated science of theology, as exhibited by the Larger and Shorter Catechisms ; and had subsequently been exercised in considering that science and ‘the analogy of faith’ in all the pulpit discourses to which they listened from Sunday to Sunday,—then it might be supposed that those students had already, before they entered the Divinity Hall, made such attainments in theology, that, with the intellectual development, strength, and culture which their University course of literature and philosophy ought to have secured, they

should, as aspirants to the ministry, have been able to dispense with the teaching and training services of more than one professor of theology, if indeed, too, they could not have altogether dispensed with the services of that one!

English students at the famous Universities of Oxford and Cambridge who look forward to be candidates for the clerical office, have no special course of theological instruction, running through the term of four years, to undergo; but if they from their early years onwards had received such a training both in scriptural and in systematic theology as Scottish and Presbyterian students were all along privileged with, then the admirable education in classical literature, in philosophy, and in science, imparted to them by a large staff of the most accomplished scholars of the kingdom, and the mental powers and energies which had been thus evolved, exercised, and directed, might forthwith enable them, without needing the special instructions of a Divinity Hall, or even of a single theological professor, for several years, to undertake the function of preaching and the other duties of the ministry! Taking full advantage of the splendid classical and philosophical education provided for them at Oxford or Cambridge, and at the same time possessing that full and methodized

knowledge of theology which Scottish boyhood seldom lacked, they might at once address themselves to the preaching of the gospel, without a lesson—far less without a four years' course of lessons—from a professor of divinity.

The Church of England system, which, in the rearing of candidates for the ministry, dispenses wholly with a Divinity Hall, might yet work well, if those candidates had all along from their childhood been versant in scriptural knowledge, and familiar with such compendious manuals as the Larger and the Shorter Catechisms. So, too, in Scotland, young men, if they commanded at Edinburgh or Glasgow, at St. Andrews or Aberdeen, the high University education peculiar to Oxford or Cambridge, might at the close of their University course proceed to the discharge of ministerial functions, without being placed under the tuition of a Divinity Hall for several years.

It might, indeed, be contended by the advocates either of the Church of England system or of that improvement just suggested upon it, that if the four sessions given to Divinity Hall attendance were devoted to the extension and enlargement of the University course of instruction in literature, philosophy, and science, the intellect of a student, more fully developed, strengthened, and furnished,

would have peculiar freshness and energy in addressing itself to the preaching of the gospel. The principle involved in that system is that the intellect should be developed into its most commanding power as an instrument, so that it may deal most effectively both with evangelical truth and with the minds of hearers. Better, far better, it might be urged, to spend four sessions in giving to that instrument its very greatest power for dealing with the evangelical truth which has been both substantially and systematically known by students from their boyhood, than in ringing endless and unimportant changes upon the forms of that evangelical truth; for have not many of the courses of divinity lectures been nothing more original than amplified paraphrases of such manuals as the Assembly Catechisms?

The foregoing remarks will help to account for the fact that the Divinity Hall, both in the Secession and in the Relief Churches, at first deemed one theological chair amply sufficient, even though its occupant had, in discharging his professorial duties, to reserve due time, care, and strength for the performance of all his pastoral duties.

The first session of the Relief Hall under the charge of Drs. Lindsay and M'Michael opened at Glasgow on the 16th August 1842, when the *first-*

*year* students were eighteen in number, and, added to them their companions of the other three years, made a sum total of forty-six—the largest company of students that ever before or afterwards attended the Relief Divinity Hall. In the next session there were only *five* first-year students; still the whole class was but slightly reduced, and kept up to the number of forty-two. In 1844 there were again *five* first-year students; but the class numbered no more than thirty-five. In 1845 the first-year students had increased to *nine*; but the whole class had fallen to twenty-seven. In 1846, when the Relief Divinity Hall held its closing session, the class consisted of twenty-one students; and of these there were *six* of the first year.

The two new professors had already, and in their early manhood, won a high reputation in their Church; and, indeed—with the exception of Dr. William Anderson, whose ardent and powerful intellect, occasionally showing the qualities of genius, made him the chief thinker and orator among his Relief brethren—they occupied the foremost rank. Great expectations had been formed of what would be achieved by the culture and energy of the twain; nor subsequently was there any disappointment, though the result of intellectual agencies upon forty young men, at their particular

stage of mental development, and in reference to their preparation for the ministerial office, could not be very nicely calculated or discriminated.

The excellent gifts and accomplishments of the two professors were neither marred nor at all concealed by the medium of an illiterate or ungainly style, for they possessed and had carefully cultivated the faculty not only of clear and terse, but of bright and vivid expression ; and all their ideas, sentiments, and illustrations took choice and compact, yet varied and flowing language. Professor M'Michael was the more rhetorical ; and any lecture or address, as written by him, had perhaps a greater literary force and finish than Professor Lindsay could have given it ; but in the reading or delivery, Professor M'Michael considerably spoiled the effectiveness of his compositions by a rather thick and inarticulate utterance. 'Some men,' says Mr. Spurgeon, in one of his admirably sagacious and racy *Lectures to my Students*, 'are loud enough, but they are not distinct ; their words overlap each other, play at leap-frog, or trip each other up. Distinct utterance is far more important than wind-power. Do give a word a fair chance ; do not break its back in your vehemence, or run it off its legs in your haste. It is hateful to hear a big fellow mutter and whisper, when his lungs are quite

strong enough for the loudest speech; but, at the same time, let a man shout ever so lustily, he will not be well heard unless he learns to push his words forward with due space between.' The inarticulate character of Dr. M'Michael's speaking was not owing to any such fantastic flourishes of rapidity as Mr. Spurgeon describes. Indeed, if a voice could 'play at leap-frog,' it would show itself to be a most *articulate* voice. The simile has, we suspect, 'its back broken' by the use to which Mr. Spurgeon puts it. The professor's inarticulate utterance was caused by the peculiar formation of his mouth, or rather of his lips, which were full and 'uncircumcised,' and which seemed to be defective in the power of so meeting together as to send forth syllables and vocables distinctly and decisively. But by his mobile features and the quick succession of looks and smiles that played upon his face, he was enabled to give a definite meaning to his undivided and unsyllabled words, and even to his 'unworded' sounds. He was remarkably genial both in his nature and in his manner, and thus he unreservedly indicated his meaning when this had been somewhat imperfectly and thickly articulated. He had many *extempore* explanations of the text of his lectures, in which his ever-ready humour exhibited itself; and those explanations abounded



in Scottish colloquialisms, and consisted of sentences that were unfinished, except by his well-known 'and so on,' 'et cetera,' or 'p'raps ;' for his mind was so full of fresh-starting suggestions, that he had to dismiss one with little ceremony, in order that he might not lose another which was just passing by. Nor could he go through any of his lectures without being waylaid and arrested by original ideas ; and these, though abruptly introduced, and loosely expressed in the very first words that could be laid hold of, were found, by the most attentive students, to be of high illuminating value. Such interjections of colloquial commentary were often, indeed, superior to the text of the lecture, though they had no pretensions to its rounded rhetoric.

Dr. Lindsay had an extensive acquaintance with Biblical literature, and was a master of scriptural exegesis, instinctively fixing upon the clauses and the terms that held both the meaning and the peculiar emphasis of the meaning, or its special modifications, its lights and shades. Nor was he led astray from the sound and consistent interpretation of a passage by a love for the ingenious.

When dealing with *doctrines*, he was more a propounder and defender of these than an inquirer into their development from a fact or a principle ;

for he took them as the systems of other theologians and the creeds of evangelical Churches had left them ; and he proceeded to fortify afresh what had been assumed, though the assaults of some subtle enemies might have been supposed to have undermined the ground on which his doctrines had been raised. In guarding against attacks from certain quarters, he overlooked enemies that might start up from other points—even points that were within the circumvallation of his innermost and strongest defences.

The professors of the Relief Divinity Hall are said to have assumed less of strict reserve and of formal authority than those of the Secession Hall, and to have treated the students more like junior brethren. Whether the difference was denominational or individual cannot be exactly determined, since the Relief Hall was in existence for little more than twenty years.

The two professors were exceedingly accessible, affable, and genial ; and by the students they were loved as well as esteemed. Dr. M'Michael had invariably a vivacious and easy address, which made the most diffident youth immediately feel at home with him ; still his facetiousness could promptly arm itself to repress the presumption of any stripling that was disposed to be unduly

familiar. On the other hand, Dr. Lindsay had a dignified presence and manner; but these were pervaded by a kindliness which drew out the confidence of students. A first glance at his appearance might give the impression that he was 'an intellectual all in all,' with an eye that was coldly and piercingly inquisitorial; but as soon as he spoke, his features began to glow with warm-hearted animation, which did not quickly pass away like breath from the surface of polished steel. He had a very thoughtful face, to which an eye of unusual penetration, and a brow that was capacious in height and breadth, gave such an expression as was once hit off felicitously by the renowned statesman and debater Charles James Fox, who, when alluding to the face of Lord Chancellor Thurlow, remarked that 'Thurlow looked wiser than any man could possibly be.' Dr. Lindsay's face had not a little of this expression (as may be seen in his portrait, in the group of the United Presbyterian professors), yet it was wholly unassumed; and, in spite of first impressions, he invariably and quickly won the warm regard and trust of the students.

The movement for a union between the Relief and the Secession had for years been advancing steadily, but slowly; for the absence of strong opposition, while showing a way to the consummation, seemed

to have made that way too smooth for progress. Having no resolute enemies to encounter, the friends of the union appeared to be rather languid in their sentiments and actions in its behalf. If they had met with obstacles in the shape of numerously signed dissents and protests, such resistance would have fired them with new zeal and energy; and the force which they must have summoned up to overbear the passionate resistance would have carried the union on to immediate success.

But as the dislike, jealousy, or strife between the Relief and the Secession had always, in the long past, been of a passive and undemonstrative character, and might rather have been called mutual indifference, so now the attachment and desire for union which had sprung up between them seemed somewhat languid. Ardent foes become the most ardent of friends. Never was there a keener fight than that which was carried on between the Secession and Relief Churches and the party that formed the majority, first in the Church of Scotland, and subsequently in the Free Church; yet those combatants laboured not less zealously to be joined together in one incorporating church union. The eager resolution which they had displayed in the conflict marked their pursuit after a union.

Far less ardent had been the union overtures

between the Relief and the Secession. But the momentous Disruption of 1843 in the Church of Scotland, accompanied by the formation of the Free Church, tended to hasten the slow-dragging union negotiations. When a new, a large, and a most energetic body of Separatists had sprung up beside them, and had announced the peculiar mission of championing State recognition and support of religion, it was high time that the far older and much smaller bodies of Separatists—the Secession and the Relief Churches—should no longer keep aloof from each other, but unite together. The crisis called on the two Churches to become one for the sake of self-preservation. Besides, it was well that, towards the middle of the nineteenth Christian century, when ecclesiastical divisions and strifes were on the increase, and when the Church of Scotland had been rent in twain, there should be a notable example of the union of two Churches that had hitherto been isolated, if not unsympathizing.

In 1847 the Relief and the United Secession Churches became one, under the name of the United Presbyterian Church, consisting of 518 congregations, of which 400 had belonged to the Secession, and 118 to the Relief. Subsequently the Church has had a most encouraging extension ;

but the union has been still more blessed in the unanimity and brotherly love which reign within, and which have effaced all former distinctions, and taken the place of the mutual apathy that was wont to mark the two sections now happily united.

For three years the Secession Synod—in anticipation of the union which would give to the Divinity Hall of the United Presbyterian Church the reinforcement of the two Relief professors—had decided against filling the theological chair which was vacant through the death of Dr. Balmer in 1844. For three years the Secession Hall was conducted by three, instead of four, professors, the expectation being that the approaching union would raise the number of professors to *five*. It is a rather strange coincidence, that as the last session of the Secession Divinity Hall had only three professors, so the last session of the United Presbyterian Divinity Hall, previous to the important enlargements and improvements that were about to be made, had the same number.

## CHAPTER VIII.

1847-1875.

Union of the Relief and the United Secession Churches, and of their Divinity Halls—The United Presbyterian Divinity Hall under the charge of Drs. Brown, Harper, Eadie [formerly of the Secession], Lindsay, and M'Michael [formerly of the Relief]—Death of Dr. Brown in 1858, leaving *four* professors, the Synod's *normal* number—Death of Dr. Lindsay in 1866—The institution of a new chair for 'Apologetical Theology,' to which the Rev. Dr. John Cairns of Berwick is appointed in 1867—The United Presbyterian Divinity Hall as taught by the Rev. Drs. Brown, Harper, Eadie, Lindsay, M'Michael, and Cairns, at Edinburgh, now the Hall's permanent seat—Death of Dr. M'Michael—The three professors, Drs. Harper, Eadie, and Cairns, during the last session of the Hall under its original, long-continued arrangement of brief sessions and of professors who held pastoral charges—The election of three additional professors by the Synod of 1876, Dr. Ker, Dr. Duff, and Mr. Paterson, and the promotion of Dr. Harper to the new post of Principal—Sudden death of Dr. Eadie after the Synod meeting.

THE union of the Relief with the Secession in 1847 had a memorable consummation in Tanfield Hall, where, four years previously, the anti-patronage and spiritual independence party, with-

drawing from the National Establishment, started into existence as a large, a fully organized and equipped, and a most devoted and energetic Church—the Free Church of Scotland! That Church, with Chalmers as the first moderator of her General Assembly, made, in that spacious hall, a splendid inauguration of her career; and the scene had many thrilling associations that could not pass away with the building, which was destined to be early taken down. Yet the same Tanfield Hall, which cradled the mighty new-born Church, was also consecrated as the scene of the union between the Secession and the Relief Churches, which, in their separate state, and carrying out their individual mission, had spread over all districts of Scotland, and for ages laboured nobly in Christianizing the population. Neither when single nor when united did these two Churches show the numerical and the financial strength, and the social and intellectual resources, of the ‘four-year-old’ Church; but this mighty infant was without the venerable character which ages of faithful, zealous, and successful toil had given both to the junior and to the senior sections that now constituted the United Presbyterian Church.

In the beginning of August 1847, the United Presbyterian Divinity Hall opened at Edinburgh



with considerably more than a hundred students, of whom there were *twenty-seven* of the first year. We shall afterwards see how these numbers rose for a time.

The professors were the five of whom individual notices have already been given, and who have received a kind of immortality for their faces and figures in a painting that is represented by many hundreds of lithographs hanging in the houses of loyal United Presbyterian churchmen. We could have wished for a thing which has commanded such an extensive yet select circulation, and which may enjoy careful preservation for the eyes of United Presbyterian children's United Presbyterian children, that it had been more a work of art, and had offered a higher than a literal likeness of each of the eminent five. The five appear in a group, obviously ruminating over some proposal that has been made, or some report that has just been brought to them,—perhaps a report that the assembled students were in the class-room, testifying by their feet a strong impatience that the professors should make their appearance and commence the work of a new session. Dr. Eadie is on his feet to go, but waits the signal from his four seniors, who are sitting, some in dubiety, some in indignation, and some in indifference. The artist

has spread over Dr. Brown's keenly yet classically beautiful face a wholly uncharacteristic simper ; he has given to Dr. Harper's finely cut and vividly expressive features a theatrical stare—a 'forced look of force ;' and into the eyes, which Dr. Lindsay raises from the book in his hands, he has put not only an all-knowing expression, but a look of such slyness as the Doctor never had, and as 'makes all the other features of his face visibly afraid of those crafty eyes !

The five professors constituted a theological faculty that might well satisfy the Church. It contrasted with the single professorship that was provided after the previous union. It exceeded, however, the Synod's *normal* number of professors, which had been deliberately fixed at *four*. Circumstances added *one* more ; and the Synod was compelled to portion out theological study so as to be occupied by five, instead of four professors. The following was the arrangement : Dr. Brown had charge of exegetical theology, Dr. Harper had charge of systematic and pastoral theology, Dr. M'Michael had charge of the history of doctrines, Dr. Lindsay had charge of sacred languages and criticism, and Dr. Eadie of hermeneutics and the evidences. None of those able and accomplished men could be spared ;

but of the five departments there were three—exegetical theology, Biblical criticism, and hermeneutics—which might have been compressed into two, if not into one. The Professor of Biblical Criticism, however, was expected to teach ‘the sacred languages ;’ and the Professor of Hermeneutics was entrusted with the unfolding of the Christian evidences, though according to ‘old use and wont,’ these evidences belonged to the province of the Professor of Systematic Theology. But the latter had been burdened with ‘pastoral theology,’ as a small postscript to his course of lectures on systematic theology, though pastoral theology was important enough to demand a chair for itself! The union of the two Halls necessarily gave too many professors for some of the departments, while other departments were unprovided for. The Synod, not caring that any of the five professors should be called upon to lay aside their old lectures and write new ones, minutely divided among them all the work proper to an unoccupied department.

The students who had belonged to the Secession felt that alongside of the lectures from the three Secession professors, the instructions now received from the two Relief professors had a peculiar freshness ; and this, too, was the experience of the

Relief students in reference to the instructions which they now got from the three Secession professors. All of them individually lost their denominational partialities, so far as these tended to make them unappreciative of their *new* teachers. They showed no disposition to decry or to depreciate novelty; and, indeed, if at that time the chair of Apologetics had been established, and had then been filled by the pre-eminently qualified man who was appointed to it after the protracted delay which took place in instituting this new professorship, an unprecedented enthusiasm would have possessed the students, and have left its mark upon the Union era of 1847. The large Free Church, even with its then existing *plethora* of able and learned men, was eager to have him as a Free Church professor; and Edinburgh University was equally desirous to place him in one of its philosophy chairs; still the Synod of his own Church was kept for many years, by scruples about the 'normal number' of professors, from placing him in a chair in which his remarkable powers were both earnestly desired and urgently needed. There was at the time a loud warning to all the Scottish Churches, that to leave their students ill fortified against the scepticism of the age would be a negligence as fatal as that of the mother of

Achilles. Still our Synod—holding on superstitiously to the sacred number of *four* professors, and horror-stricken at its change into *six*—disregarded the danger, and for twenty years delayed to appoint Dr. John Cairns!

For nearly ten years the Divinity Hall of the United Presbyterian Church was largely attended. In 1850 there were *forty-three* first-year students; in 1852 the number rose to *fifty*; and in 1856 there were no fewer than *fifty-five*,—the largest number of first-year students ever known in the history of the Hall. The years which we have selected showed the tide advancing, but in the several intervals between those years the tide receded considerably; and steadily, after 1856, the attendance decreased, until in 1864 the number of first-year students was only *twenty-four*. Again it rose by eight or nine, until in 1871 it bounded up to *thirty-nine*, but in the following year fell down once more to *twenty-four*. It sunk still lower in more recent years, and in last year—the closing year of the United Presbyterian Divinity Hall with its seven or eight weeks' session, and its professors that held pastoral charges, the memorable year of 1875—the number of first-year students was no more than *seventeen*!

There were, indeed, a few students from other

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Scottish Churches, but fewer than might have been expected,—fewer, perhaps, than there would have been if the Theological Halls of those Churches had not lately been reinforced by highly gifted and cultured professors, conspicuous among whom was Dr. Robert Wallace—a man of transcendent abilities for the pulpit, the chair, and the hall of debate, and of equally rare and versatile powers for literary spheres. The opportunity that would have encouraged a large influx of such students into the United Presbyterian Divinity Hall was neglected in 1847; and when at a subsequent period it was tardily found or made, it came much too late.

While looking, however, at the steadily decreasing number of *first-year* students, it should not be forgotten that, happily, there has been no corresponding diminution in the number of students belonging *to each of the other four years*, and that the aggregate attendance at the Hall continued to range from 130 to 150. It cannot, then, be complained that the professors have been left without pupils to draw forth and reward their teaching powers; for they have never lacked the pleasure and the stimulus of confronting well-filled class-rooms, where there were large reserves of sympathy, that could respond to swell and pro-

long all the eloquence that came from the chair, or where (to employ a Whately simile) there were enough of lighted brands and broad mirrors to reflect in an enlarged and intensified blaze the intellectual radiance which a professor had kindled in himself!

Still, though the students of divinity may be sufficiently numerous to form an immediately and powerfully sympathetic audience for a professor, and to assure him that whenever, in the midst or at the close of a lengthy exposition or discussion, he has the ability as well as the inclination to break into a strain of impassioned eloquence, this will not sound as a hollow soliloquy, returning to himself in a mocking echo; for it will have passed into the innermost being of his hearers, and arrayed itself in their suggested thoughts and associations, and in their excited sympathies. Yet on other and more momentous accounts, the United Presbyterian students may be becoming too few. The denomination itself has been rapidly extending on all sides—even within the home-sphere—requiring more ministers, and therefore a larger supply of divinity students.

But this is not all. In the United Presbyterian Church, as in the other Scottish Churches, clerical life and health have during the last quarter of

a century become much more precarious than formerly. In spite of such novelties for Seceding ministers as long summer holidays, enabling them to go into sea-side quarters, or to take a Continental tour,—perhaps to voyage across the Atlantic, and remain within the great Republic long enough to obtain a call from some vacant American city-congregation,—pastoral labour seems now to be far more oppressive and injurious to the constitution than it was before; even though the Sunday services have been signally abbreviated, though for ease in many cases the discourse is given from ‘the paper’ instead of from the memory, and though ‘diets of visitation’ and of ‘catechizing’ have been changed into ‘calls’ and mere nods. Yet the tender minister soon breaks down, long before there is anything like the old accumulation of manuscript sermons in every press of his manse, and before he reaches his half-jubilee year! Collegiate charges, too, are much more common than before, both in town and in country; and often the senior recovers his strength, and comes to the succour of his exhausted junior. The ‘daughters of the land’ in Glasgow may, in May next, pronounce Secession ministers of this generation to be taller and more comely, as well as more intellectual and accomplished, than their



forefathers ; but there are facts indicating a process of enervation and of relaxed endurance for the wear and tear of office, and the sensitive frames seem sooner to need nursing—a prospect, however, which appeals to Western sympathy.

Thus a stationary Divinity Hall is believed to have too few students to meet the largely increased wants of the advancing Church. The question is often put,—Why is the Hall more stationary now, and why are there fewer students now than formerly? The causes of the undoubted declension must be ascertained ere sure remedies can be applied. Justice, however, to the existing ministry, in the shape of a far more liberal remuneration for their labours, might be found to encourage a larger force of young men to devote themselves to preparation for the sacred office ; and thus the evil could be promptly cured before its origin was fully investigated.

Shortly after the union of the Relief and the Secession Halls in 1847, the senior professor, Dr. John Brown, began to be assailed by the infirmities of an old age that had been prematurely superinduced through the severity of his continuous application to study. There was no weakening of his intellectual powers, except in their *elasticity*; and elasticity never had been a prominent characteristic

of any of his faculties, which were strong rather than nimble or subtle. Advancing years lowered and chilled his temperament, and impaired the force of his elocution. The extreme energy and vivacity with which he had hitherto expressed his ideas and sentiments were toned down. Not only was the reading of his lectures much less emphatic, but in the reading his eyes were much more closely kept to his manuscript, instead of their glances being turned keenly upon the class,—glances which gave animation and exacted attention to whatever he said. Occasionally his old fire would return and blaze forth, when suddenly moved to descant upon St. Paul's transcendent characteristics ; and when, removing his spectacles from his eyes, and raising these bright eyes, he addressed the students with the impassioned tones and looks that had thrilled many an audience for more than forty years, as well as his class of the old Secession Hall.

In the session of 1858 he was through serious illness unable to meet his students, and Dr. Lindsay undertook to officiate for the absent professor. Dr. Brown was not without a hope that he might again be engaged in his favourite work of exegetical tuition ; but in little more than a fortnight after that silent session he died, in the seventy-fifth year of his age, and at the close of the twenty-fourth

year of his professorship. Fortunately his peculiar qualifications and achievements as an interpreter of Scripture will continue to be seen in the many elaborate volumes which he published in the last years of his life.

The professors were now *four*—the Synod's legitimate number; and the only change made was that Dr. Lindsay was transferred to the exegetical chair. In this department he taught effectively for six years; and a much longer continuance of his useful and honourable career was expected by his many friends, when it suddenly closed in the summer of 1866. He was in the sixty-fourth year of his age, and the twenty-fifth year of his professorship.

There were now only *three* professors, so that the Synod could now appoint Dr. John Cairns of Berwick-on-Tweed to a professorship,—as it did at once and with enthusiastic acclamation,—an appointment which received emphatic approval from all in the other Scottish Churches who valued commanding intellect, great and varied yet ever-available learning, and rare devotedness, amiability, and modesty of nature. The chair of 'Apologetical Theology' was formed, and Dr. Cairns was chosen to fill it, in May 1867, twenty years later than 1847,—two dates which we give, to mark

the term during which the Synod was spell-bound by the sacred number of *four*.

The question of Hall reform and enlargement had been often discussed, but always without any immediate result, as so many of the clergy declared themselves perfectly satisfied with the seminary's efficiency, and theological committees vied with each other in sounding its praises. At length the deliberations about extending the annual session from two to five or six months, and about having professors who should not be burdened at all with a pastorate, were seriously begun; and they promptly issued in the Synod resolving that the session of 1875 should be the final session for the old Hall, and that the remodelled Hall should open in the November of 1876.

Dr. M'Michael suddenly died in the spring of 1874,—an event which occasioned keen grief, and might have been a discouragement, to those who were desirous that the new Hall should have a prosperous start. The Doctor had such a love for and mastery over learning, that it would neither have been difficult nor incongruous for him to be engrossed wholly with his professorship; and he had talents so versatile and acquirements so varied as called for the scope of a five months' session. He would have been at no loss how to spread his

instructions over this lengthened term, without diluting them. He would not have solved the problem how to make his two months' lectures serve for five months by simply lecturing on two instead of on five days each week, and by occupying the other days with examinations. His intellect—putting forth both its energies upon the various subjects that were within his special province, and its influence upon his students, continuously for five months—would have appeared to far greater advantage; and he was one of the old professors, who, by the elasticity and the productiveness of his nature, would at once have given efficiency and lustre to the new Hall. But his light was to be extinguished before it could be transferred to the remodelled institute.

The Hall session of 1875—the last under the old system—was closed by the Rev. Dr. M'Gavin of Dundee, then Moderator of the Synod, who delivered a remarkably powerful, appropriate, and thrilling address. Unquestionably it was by far the ablest and most impressive speech which the students had ever received from a moderator, and it was entirely worthy to be the time-honoured Hall's elegy.

Unusual interest was shown by clergy and laity regarding the three additional professors who were

to be chosen by the Synod at its meeting in 1876. There was a demand that impartially, and with an utter repudiation of all considerations except each candidate's abilities, the Synod should make an election. Perhaps, however, there was neither a sufficiently strong nor a sufficiently general resolution that the prelections of each *lecturing* professor should have such individual and original merits that, if they were published, they would at once take rank with valuable treatises.

Mr. Paterson, who had enjoyed a training at Oxford, and who had been highly distinguished there for his classical attainments, and had won a rare reputation for his Hebrew and Syriac scholarship, was chosen by the Synod to fill the chair for Hebrew. His youth was objected to by some, who seem disposed to reverse the scriptural course of calling upon the sons to succeed 'the fathers,' and to become 'princes in the land.' Such objectors would go back, and 'take' the grandfathers! Along with his remarkable yet ever-growing scholarship, Mr. Paterson's youth was an invaluable advantage, an irresistible recommendation. Dr. Duff of Helensburgh was chosen for the chair of Church History; and all who know him are confident that he will fill the post with distinguished efficiency. Dr. John Ker of Glasgow, a man whose high genius

has all the complement of intellectual faculties developed and exercised by the largest culture which ancient and modern learning can give, was elected to the chair of Pastoral Training. The fact that thirty years ago he had such qualifications as should have not only warranted, but secured his appointment to a professorship, is no argument against his present appointment; it only excites deep but unavailing regret over the losses caused by delay in Dr. Ker's as in Dr. Cairns' case.

It may be questioned if one of the Divinity Hall chairs ought not to have been wholly engrossed with the subject of pulpit oratory and the art of preaching. If anything should be taught, if anything should be well taught—taught with pre-eminent power and skill—it should be *this*. If there be any department in which young men should not be entirely left to the self-education which they can acquire by the reading and study of the best books that have been written, it is emphatically that of preaching. They may be left to gain from books a knowledge of dogmatic theology and of Church history (and, indeed, what professor in these spheres can hope, in a course of lectures, to surpass or even to equal what is being constantly put forth in books?); but in reference to preaching, there is an express call for a pro-

fessor, and for his living voice. In addition to other reasons, there is this weighty one, that in no book is there as yet an adequate discussion of pulpit oratory.

The venerable Dr. Harper received from the Synod the richly-merited honour of being raised by acclamation to the principalship of the new Hall. Our resolution to refrain from delineating the individual characteristics of *living* professors almost gives way here; and we feel strongly moved to offer an admiring tribute to the theological veteran, and to the intellectual services of sterling value which he has rendered to the Hall for more than thirty years.

We had never doubted that such a reticence would fall to be observed by us about Dr. Eadie, as about the venerable Dr. Harper and their illustrious colleague, Dr. Cairns. At the meeting of Synod, Dr. Eadie showed all his mental elasticity; and his stalwart frame, though heavier and slower in its movements, bore no token of immediate prostration. The Synod had not the faintest premonition that his prodigious acquirements, his combination of intellectual powers, and his rare capacity for hard and continuous brain-toil, would, along with his manly and cheerful presence, never once be displayed in the new Hall! He died on



the 4th June, and the loss of this largely-endowed, many-sided man, who added vast accomplishments to his great gifts, and subjected both to the fullest exercise, was a grievous calamity to his Church and the Divinity Hall. Where is the man who for many years can hope to be possessor and master of Dr. Eadie's learning?

Of Biblical scholars in Scotland, Dr. Eadie was, as we have described elsewhere [in an obituary sketch in the *Dundee Advertiser*], the chief; and this was no common distinction. Of the many thousands of English and Scottish clergymen, the number of those who have devoted themselves to the scientific interpretation of the Bible in its original languages could be reckoned up on the fingers of one hand; yet who in this small group would be judged worthy as scholars to stand on the high level occupied by hundreds of their German contemporaries? British, compared with German, exegesis was a superficial and illiterate instrument of Bible interpretation; it might be wielded by popular preachers, but was altogether unsuitable to profound theologians. Dr. John Brown was the first in Scotland to give a start to learned exegesis; but, from his ignorance of German, he could not avail himself of German scholarship—except of that portion which had been translated into English.

To Dr. Eadie it was left to set the example of examining and expounding Scripture under the searching lights of German learning; and as a Biblical scholar he had a high name in America and on the Continent.

When only in the thirty-first year of his age, he was appointed to the chair of Biblical Criticism. There had been among his brethren a strong impression of his learning, and this had been confirmed recently by a very elaborate critique which he issued upon a remarkable discourse by the Rev. George Gilfillan on the intermediate state—*Hades*. It was generally said that this critique determined the Synod to elect Dr. Eadie to the professorship. It was able, learned, and spirited; and its speculations, though about the vast ‘unseen,’ never ventured a hair’s-breadth beyond or aside from the guesses of ancestral wisdom. The critic declined to accompany Mr. Gilfillan’s diving into the unfathomable, but bound himself to the short ‘plummet’ of the Westminster Confession. Dr. Eadie has not only gratified the rather timid wish of the Synod that his speculations should never strike out from the beaten track, but he has amply realized the Synod’s nobler hope, that he would turn the best lights of learning upon the sacred book, and give to his pupils a zeal for

the same study. He won the affection and esteem, as well as the admiration, of all who in successive companies attended his lectures. He met them with no assumption of dignity—no summons to sit down at his feet like little children. He addressed them as fellow-searchers after truth; and he was never afraid of displaying his humour before them, lest his own dignity or that of his office might be compromised. He had a happy combination of vocal gifts with intellect and learning, for though his speaking was, and continued to be, far from faultless, yet it was thoroughly natural, and eminently powerful and pleasing. His voice was metallic—a stringed instrument—yet it had force and melody. His pronunciation had a full Scottish breadth, yet each syllable, though not finely, was distinctly articulated; it often set accent at defiance, but it never missed the true emphasis of his meaning. He had a prodigious appetite for mental work, and no pressure of toil seemed to exhaust him. None of his friends had any hesitation in believing that in November he would be more than ready for the many additional labours of the opening winter session.

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## CHAPTER IX.

1737-1876.

The Church's superintendence of students by Presbyteries and committees—Scholarships.

THE inadequacy of all the teaching and training that were likely to be received by a student from his attendance at the Divinity Hall for a succession of short sessions was glaringly evident. The Hall left him alone, and had nothing whatever to do with him, for more than *ten consecutive months in each year*; and though the instructions, which the Hall period of less than two months poured into and over his intellect, had been like the inundations of the Nile, that bestow a soil, as well as prepare it for harvest-bearing, and though they had provided intellectual as well as theological culture, yet the ten months of entire and continuous Hall inaction must have tended to reduce him to mental sterility. Even if the Nile's overflowings were annually restricted to a period of six or eight weeks, and if within this term the river's rising

and falling took place—so that the remaining ten months of the year were a season of uninterrupted drought—then Egypt would at once cease to be ‘the gift of the Nile,’ and the land would have lost its marvellous fertility.

Nor, passing over the ten months of holidays, and scanning closely the two months engrossed by Hall attendance, can it be disguised that, to the great majority of the students, this latter term also had a holiday character; not merely because it was pleasantly spent, but because it was free from hard and resolute work. The Hall hours, occupied in listening, might be trying and exhausting, but listening seldom demands a severe and unrelaxed exercise of the highest intellectual faculties; and, outside the Hall, how many hours a day would a student give to concentrated and sustained thinking, or to elaborate writing on some theological topic, or to steady progress in mastering the Hebrew language?

The Church, therefore, has wisely arranged that the Hall recess, which hitherto extended over a preposterously large proportion of the year, should not be of a holiday character,—should indeed be as little of a holiday character as the Hall period itself. As a supplement to the course of professorial instruction, a system of ministerial and

Presbyterial superintendence was put into strict yet kindly operation.

Every minister of the Secession was enjoined to have a vigilant outlook for discovering in his congregation any young men who possessed such talents and piety as might qualify them for the ministry. He was expected to develop and foster in them a desire to devote themselves to preparation for that sacred office ; and, as soon as they became students, to offer them all the advice and assistance which they needed and which his own experience suggested. Scottish ministers have always been more chary than their English Dissenting brethren in trying to persuade young lads to engage in study with a view to the ministry ; and it may be affirmed that one or two English ministers of the Independent or Baptist denomination have *directly induced* more of their Sunday-school pupils to become theological students than were so raised by a whole generation of Seceding ministers. Scottish ministers have shrunk from the responsibility of selecting and influencing young men to become students ; and, indeed, it was unnecessary, for *Scottish parents* had already undertaken that responsibility, and consecrated to the pulpit such of their male children as were believed to have talents and eloquence—from their

having quickly committed a hymn to memory, and recited it with a loud voice !

But when a youth had entered upon a course of study with a view to the ministry, and especially when he had arrived at the stage which introduced him to theology, his pastor took henceforth a deep interest in the progress of his studies and in the development of his intellect and Christian character, and treated him like a son or a younger brother.

It was further arranged that the Presbytery within whose bounds a student resided should superintend and direct his studies, prescribing courses of reading in Greek and Hebrew, and in theology and Church history,—on all of which he should be carefully examined,—and appointing to him subjects for written discussion, and texts for sermons and lectures to be delivered from memory.

Indeed, in theory, and often, too, in reality, a student stood more closely related to his Presbytery than to his Divinity Hall professors ; and the former may have had more to do than the latter with the direction of his intellectual pursuits, the unfolding of his professional qualifications, and the formation of his character. All this, too, occasionally, when he had but the slightest personal acquaintance with the several members of his

Presbytery, and when none of these possessed surpassing endowments and scholarship that might have influenced him; but when some of the presbyters were men of rare faculty, culture, and energy, and when he was admitted to the circle within which such qualities manifested themselves, far more potent was their sway over him.

They had the means of knowing what intellectually he was, and what a University education had done for and in him. He was admitted to the Divinity Hall by a Presbyterial examination, which was designed to test his proficiency in the classical, mathematical, and philosophical studies which he had recently prosecuted at college. The Presbytery could thus ascertain—with a completeness and a precision which his theological professors could not share—how he was qualified and furnished for his course in divinity. His talents and acquirements could be seen and gauged even when the examining Presbytery might be so indulgent to blundering ignorance and mental barrenness as to refrain from rejecting his application for admission to the Divinity Hall; still the disqualifications, when gross or serious, were not only discovered, but made the ground for the student's entrance to the Hall being delayed. The ordeal varied in severity, some Presbyteries con-



ducting it slowly and rigorously; yet in no case was there anything like the difficulty of 'the camel passing through the eye of the needle;' it was rather like the needle passing through the eye of a camel.

On the student's admission to the Hall, the Presbytery still kept charge of him, requiring from him the delivery of discourses on texts that had been assigned, and various examinations on ecclesiastical history, the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures, theological doctrines, and the Hall lectures. The fact that he was to preach before a dozen or a score of ministers, who would be critics as well as hearers, must have been stimulating, for his Presbytery sermons were—in thinking, composition, and delivery—much superior to his Hall performances. Striking texts—texts that not only allowed, but suggested a fresh and individual method of treatment—were chosen by Presbyteries; whereas the professors fixed upon a chapter or two of a Scripture book for the whole class, and allotted each consecutive verse to each student in alphabetical order of the surnames; and generally such texts admitted merely of a plain exposition, with a great deal about the preceding and the succeeding 'context,' as elucidating the writer's 'argument,' and required to be intersected by 'divisions' which were com-

mon and beaten as highways; and somehow a student took more time, or improved it better, in preparing a Presbytery sermon. The number of Presbyterial critics, compared with the single judge enthroned in the Hall, might in *prospect* be more inspiring, and in *retrospect* might be more instructive, as well as more soothing. In each Presbytery there were several members qualified and determined to consider impartially what justice the student-preacher had done to his text, what talents he had manifested, and what advice should be given him for the cultivation of his mind and the improvement of his discourses. If he elicited and enforced the genuine meaning of his text, they did not censure his inattention to formal divisions,—far less did they resent his adoption of such *firstlies* and *secondlies* as they had not sanctioned either by their use or by their praise. Occasionally a minister who had dealt with the same text in a ‘circuit’ sermon (a sermon that went with him into all the pulpits he entered), might be unreasonably severe in his blame of such students as failed to divine his method of division, or preferred their own; but, in general, broad views of the subject-matter of the text were taken, and the preacher’s merits or demerits were not tested by ascertaining whether he had pressed and

pinched that subject-matter within an artificial framework of 'heads' and 'particulars.' Presbyterian severity was expended upon serious offences and shortcomings. A student's intellectual qualities and characteristics were better known in his Presbytery than in the Hall; and the knowledge was employed to confirm and mature what was of high promise, and to correct or even to suppress whatever tendencies were exaggerated. Little or no sarcasm showed itself in the Presbyterian criticism from the mere wish of being sarcastic, or of wounding the student's self-love; it seemed to be restrained by the manly consciousness, that as it could neither be parried nor returned, it had better be spared. It cannot be supposed that Presbyteries never met with affectation or with imbecility, or declined to deal with either; but in such cases the Presbyterian—like the professorial—scourge was ineffectual.

More than once during a vacancy in the single chair of the Divinity Hall, there was a blank session; and all the students were sent to their several Presbyteries to receive such instructions as might compensate for the suspended lectures and examinations. At such an emergency, the time was spent neither idly nor unprofitably. From the students was then exacted rather more than less

of work ; and it could not but be largely productive of good. They were required to read in the various departments of theological study far more extensively and carefully than ever, to understand and remember the views and arguments of the most eminent divines about cardinal doctrines, and to be thoroughly conversant with all the heresies and systems of error that had sprung up within the theological field, as well as with the events, episodes, and men of authority and action that mark some particular eras of Church history. They had to pass through a much wider and fuller course of *reading* than any course of *hearing* could have been ; and then their mastery of all was frequently tested by the strictest examinations. The two or three members of a Presbytery who took this academical charge of a student were animated by the most ardent desire that his progress in mental culture, in theological study, and in preparation for ministerial functions, should not be injured by this temporary arrangement ; and they exerted themselves to the uttermost, while they caused him to exert himself to the same degree. They read the ablest and most suggestive works, and gave his mind the benefit which their own had received ; and of the books which had been prescribed for his own reading, he was required to give an analysis.

All this labour was undertaken in order that the student, instead of standing still, might make the largest possible strides of advance.

We are ready to admit the importance of several of the functions which Presbyteries have performed ; but we are confident that their one function of paramount value is that to which they have regularly and unceasingly attended, in the testing and training of the students who were to be the Church's ministers. In all their other functions, Presbyteries have been co-operative with and subordinate to the Synod—the Church's Supreme Court ; but in this one function—the *superintendence of students*—Presbyteries stood forth alone. From the memorable day, the 5th December 1733, when the four 'Fathers of the Secession' met at Gairney Bridge and formed themselves into the 'Associate Presbytery,' down to very recent times, when the Synod—sanctioning that change from the *oral* to the *written*, from the memory to the 'paper,' which has been so largely carried out in the substitution of *read* for *delivered* sermons in Secession pulpits—called into existence travelling and catechetical 'committees' to relieve Presbyteries of some of their duties in reference to students, and to clothe the students from head to foot in 'examination papers,'—that superintendence was, for nearly a

hundred and twenty years, the work of Presbyteries exclusively, and by it what an inestimable service have they rendered to the Church ! What a long and numerous procession of excellent preachers and pastors issues from the testing and training Presbyteries ! In this aspect and relation the work of Presbyteries rises far above the work of the Synod.

In reference to such examinations on the course of University studies as were instituted to test a student's qualifications for admission to the Divinity Hall, and the subsequent examinations which were designed to ascertain his progress and proficiency in the Hall studies, and the growth of his powers for the ministerial office, it had often been complained that, throughout the Presbyteries of the denomination, no uniformity of method was observed by the examiners ; and that even in the same Presbytery both the examiners and the method were perpetually changing, and seemed to be fixed upon at hap-hazard each time that a candidate came forward, so that the whole process had an *extempore* aspect.

Hence, all the Presbyteries differed from each other ; and every Presbytery, in the course of a single year or even of a single month, differed from itself as to the range, minuteness, and rigour of

the examinations ; and there was the wide gate in some Presbyteries, and the strait gate in others ; while here and there could be found a Presbytery that had both a wide gate and a strait gate,—now startling, by the severe pressure of its conditions and requirements, some unprepared, ignorance-laden, yet indulgence-expecting candidate, and then at its next meeting astonishing, by its easy and untesting scrutiny, some applicant who was ready to fight his way through all the difficulties that might be interposed.

This state of things was at length reformed, chiefly through the carrying out of the SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME, the introduction of which had many other advantages.

It was more than time that a fund should be raised for 'bursaries' or 'scholarships.' The money which these provided was needed by many a deserving student, and the competition which they afforded was scarcely less valuable. After all that has been advanced against prizes in connection with education, it still remains an undoubted fact that they do strongly stimulate the mental energies of the young ; and, surely, the full and continuous activity of the faculties is as urgently required at the Divinity Hall as at the earlier stages of school or college.

Even as yet there has been no such reward except for scholarship; to mere 'cram,' all the 'crumbs' have been thrown, though the exercise of independent thinking and writing stood, at least, equally in need of encouragement. Of those who had gained 'scholarships,' ranging from the lowest to the highest grade, what proportion could have written essays that were slightly above commonplace both in substance and in style? Their 'cram,' in filling up the examination papers in classical, mathematical, and philosophical departments, might have yielded 100 per cent., not to mention the compound interest which might have been added by the appreciative examiners; but 'cram' will paralyse—at least will not move—the thinking and the literary powers.

Why should there not be prizes in the Divinity Hall as well as in the University; and for excellence, too, in all the departments of theological study? A prize for the most powerful and eloquent sermon might, indeed, be heard of—by some outsiders—with amazement and sneering; but any objections to such a prize would apply with equal force to a stipend for preaching.

In connection with 'scholarships,' it was at once evident that the former method of Presbyterian examinations could not be followed, and that, to



secure justice for all the students who were competitors, as well as to gain the ends for which the scholarship scheme had been introduced, new and uniform tests for comparative proficiency should be adopted. A sufficiently good model was found in the way in which Scottish and English Universities conducted their examinations for bursaries and scholarships. The Synod appointed a board or committee of ministers to act as examiners, who should annually prepare, on the various branches of study, the questions and exercises for competitors, who, being placed on an equal footing with each other as to time and the absence of all help, were called to answer those questions and to do those exercises *in writing*. The scheme of scholarships and bursaries, and the method for ascertaining and rewarding impartially the attainments of each competitor, have hitherto worked admirably; and the result is that many students of high promise have received important assistance, and that the average of learning in the Divinity Hall has been considerably raised. Perhaps the finding of a place in the examinations for testing, and in the scholarships for rewarding, intellectual capacity and strength, as well as mere acquirements, deserves early consideration.

The method of examination pursued in carrying

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out the bursaries and scholarships scheme has come to displace partially the Presbyterian examinations of divinity students. Applicants for admission to the Divinity Hall are no longer examined, each by his own Presbytery, and orally ; but their knowledge of the various branches of their University studies is tested by questions and exercises assigned to them by a committee, and which must be gone through in writing. Presbyterian examinations, too, are fast ceasing to be oral ; they are conducted in writing, which enables both parties to be much more exact.

For some time the Edinburgh and the Glasgow Presbyteries of the United Presbyterian Church, which had many divinity students under their charge, divided themselves into several committees, that were entrusted with the work of examining those students in groups. That work, except for such an arrangement, would have engrossed more than the full time of those Presbyteries, and caused all their other business to be set aside. The various committees, at their own time, examine their respective groups of students ; and thus the Presbyteries are left free to discuss and dispose of their general business. It is only when students are under trials for licence that some of their exercises and discourses are heard and criticized

by the whole Presbytery, and not by one of its committees.

Reference might be made to the superintendence which has been provided at the seats of the four Scottish Universities during the winter session, for all students belonging to the United Presbyterian Church who are prosecuting their arts curriculum. At each of the four places, a minister of learning and influence was appointed to hold frequent meetings with the students, in order that he might advise or assist them regarding their immediate or their prospective studies, and impress them with the importance of these, when carried on with diligence, as preparations for the ministry to which they looked forward. Each of these four ministers was an honorary, yet very useful, superintendent ; and occasionally he acted as a professor of exegetical theology, expounding to the young men a chapter from the Greek Testament, which they had just read in his hearing ; while at other times he spoke from the chair of apologetics, and displayed the evidences of Christianity against the most recent assaults of scepticism. Attendance, however, upon such suitable exercises and seasonable prelections was not *compulsory*, and comparatively few students appeared. Still the Synod annually received emphatic testimony as to the advantages resulting

from the classes formed and the meetings held by those superintendents of the arts students. Perhaps, if the post of a yearly superintendent were exchanged for the office of a tutor, who should be chosen with care and for a longer period, and if the attendance of United Presbyterian collegians were *enjoined*, and not merely *recommended*, much greater and more extensive good would be done.

What has been achieved by the Presbyterial superintendence and training of our divinity students during the last 140 years it is impossible to estimate. The service which Presbyteries have rendered to the Church in providing her, from the beginning of her history, with preachers and pastors who were worthy successors of 'the Four Fathers' of the Secession, was of incalculable value; and had it been withheld, how much less vigorous and prosperous would that Church have been!

We admit, indeed, the capacity and tendency of young men, who, after receiving at home, and from their infancy, religious instruction in the Bible and Shorter Catechism, have enjoyed the classical and philosophical culture of a University, to educate themselves in theology and train themselves for the ministry, without any formal teaching from a Divinity Hall or training from a Presbytery, if only they make due use of the grand library of English

theology, from which many illustrious professors and presbyters, though dead, continue yet to speak! We admit (what has been the fundamental theory, the ruling belief of the Church of England as to the professional tuition of her clergy—be they curates or archbishops) that the youthful mind that has been developed and elevated by University studies is and must be the chief ‘factor’ in the process of its theological education; and that, though it were left entirely to the teaching and influence of the best books that were easily accessible, it might soon be qualified for an effective performance of ministerial functions. From such a brain the pulpit-orator might leap forth fully formed and armed! Instead of overlooking, we prominently hold forth the fact that every student, surrounded by such books as he can easily find in the magnificent stores of English and German theology, ought to be his own chief teacher in theology and trainer for the ministry; for self-education is the vital part of all education. Still, this does not invalidate our other position, that the Divinity Hall and the superintendence and training of Presbyteries are of inestimable value.

To the Hall and the Presbyteries may be directly and largely traced the able, pure, full, and fervid preaching of the gospel which has invariably

distinguished the Church of the Erskines and of Gillespie, and given her an influential and honoured place in the country. No 'uncertain sound,' not even a discordant sound, came from any of her twenty-one professors, or from her Presbyteries; hence the same gospel was the theme of all the sermons from all her pulpits during the 140 years which, in passing over other Churches, had seen or brought several changes of doctrine. There was the greatest diversity of intellectual capacity, learning, and culture in her professors, from Wilson to Cairns; but in one and all of them there was an identity of the 'one faith, one Lord, one baptism,' preserved in 'the form of sound words.'

Dr. Alexander Carlyle of Musselburgh, in his *Autobiography*, remarks with the undisguised air of giving forth an oracle,—original, yet shrewd; new, yet the lesson of experience,—that 'there was one advantage attending the lectures of a dull professor [of theology], viz. that he could form no school, and the students were left entirely to themselves, and naturally formed opinions far more liberal than those they got from the professor. This was the answer I gave to Patrick Lord Elibank, one of the most learned and ingenious noblemen of his time, when he asked me one day, many years afterwards, what could be the reason

that the young clergymen of that period so far surpassed their predecessors of his early days in useful accomplishments and liberality of mind, viz. that the professor of theology was dull, and Dutch, and prolix. His lordship said he perfectly understood me, and that this entirely accounted for the change.'

It seems an odd idea that a 'dull' professor should produce *lively* and *accomplished* pupils! We believe Dr. Carlyle's testimony, that the professor whom he mentions (his own teacher in theology, and the teacher of other young men, who, though not more highly gifted, became more widely renowned, than himself) *was* 'dull;' but this professor's predecessors in the Divinity Chair had been equally 'dull,' and far less learned. These, then, according to the Carlyle and Elibank theory, ought to have produced pupils who were quite as lively and accomplished as those that sprung into free life and action from the *dulness* of a later occupant of the chair.

It is known, however, that the pupils of the earlier professors were not less 'dull' than their masters, and quite deserved the contempt which the Musselburgh critic and his noble friend expressed. But the 'young clergymen' of the succeeding generation, Alexander Carlyle's contem-

poraries, who along with him sat at the feet of a 'dull, Dutch, and prolix' professor,—how were they distinguished for intellectual freedom, energy, and culture? They certainly had not received, nor did they bear, the 'image' of their professor; and as his dulness had not impressed its 'likeness' upon them, so neither could his dulness have produced its absolute and exact *opposite* of mental vivacity in them, any more than a Hottentot parent is expected to have sons with the face and form of Apollo, and daughters with the face and form of Venus!

When we learn, from Dr. Carlyle's narrative, *who* those 'young clergymen' were,—Hugh Blair (afterwards the celebrated preacher, whose published sermons found admission to, and a Sunday perusal within, every English abode of fashionable life, from the palace downwards); John Blair (who became Prebendary of Westminster); John Home (the author of *Douglas—a Tragedy*); William Robertson (subsequently famous in Scotland as the Principal of Edinburgh University, and the ruler of the National Church, and with a far more precious, yet also more widely extended fame as the historian of Scotland), etc. etc.,—we are at once assured that it was their native talents and tendencies, and not the 'dull' lectures of their divinity



professor, that accounted for those characteristics which had been observed and praised by Lord Elibank. The intellectual peculiarities of Blair and Robertson could be traced neither to the dulness nor to the liveliness of that professor. The dull, dreary, and unattractive style, however, in which he had exhibited Christian theology to them, might be largely responsible for the distaste which they felt regarding it; but that style neither stimulated nor developed their intellectual characteristics.

Dr. Carlyle esteems it as a great privilege that, through the professor's dulness, no 'school' of theology was formed, and that the professor's students did not become his doctrinal disciples. In the Divinity Hall of the Secession, no such cause for the absence of a theological 'school' could ever be alleged, for each of the twenty-one professors possessed earnestness and intellectual energy enough both for system-making and for influencing students; yet, throughout the entire period of 140 years, there was but *one* theological 'school,'—the school of the Apostles,—to which all the twenty-one professors and their students belonged.

## CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

### THE FUTURE.

IN closing our retrospect of this Divinity Hall, which has been in existence and in full operation for 140 years, and while thinking of the many thousands of students who have been therein taught and trained, and have thence emerged to occupy ministerial spheres all over Scotland, and in England, Ireland, and the colonies, we cannot refrain from musing sadly upon those of their comrades who were suddenly, in their academic course, arrested by disease, and prematurely, ere it was 'noon,' and before their talents, acquirements, and devotedness could pass from promise into performance, laid in the grave.

Not a few—no fewer, indeed, than *several hundreds*—there must have been, since 1737, of *those early dead* among the Secession divinity students,—a force large enough to have *manned* the pulpits of our Church in 1876! Michael Bruce was among them, and others there were of glorious promise,

though, unlike Bruce's, their promise was not a partial performance, but was only 'written in water;' and if time had been allowed them, they might have shown the genius of a Bruce or a Pollok, a Cairns or a Gilfillan. After the first years of the Secession, and as soon as her students became numerous, not a single session of the Divinity Hall opened but those who returned found that a companion was missing, who would no longer sit beside them in the class-room, join in their daily walks or their Saturday rambles, and share their studies or their recreations. He had already been carried to the grave, or was on a sick-bed which he was destined only to leave for that final resting-place. No man settled in the ministry, after his course of five years at the Hall, could fail to remember that several of those who entered that seminary along with him did not survive to quit it in his company, and go forward together to the high calling which had fired all their youthful ambition. Some well-known faces in the Hall had been annually missed; and in the smaller circle of those students who had been his most cherished associates, and with whom he had exchanged the confidence and friendship of ingenuous youth, a dearly prized and beloved companion, who had made the passing hours of Hall study and recreation doubly delightful, was gone

for ever! Here the writer cannot but record the name of William Taylor,—alas! only a name since 1842, but representing a youth of fine abilities, warm heart, high spirit, and indomitable courage, who had been our closest comrade at school, at college, and at the Divinity Hall, but was snatched away by death immediately before his Hall studies were ended. How much of rare talent, culture, and devotion, consecrated to the ministry, has been suddenly blighted before the preparatory training was finished; and the dispensation is all the more mournful and mysterious, when we consider the many obstacles and difficulties that lay in the way of education for those students, and that must have been bravely wrestled with and overcome. Yet there is *One* who will not forget that ‘it was in the heart’ of those who died in their student-days to serve God in the ministry of the gospel; and what they did and endured, in their merely preparatory course, may receive as glorious a reward as honours the labours of the minister or the missionary who dies in a good old age.

The retrospect of the Divinity Hall would have been melancholy if the Hall had now to be closed and to bear the inscription, ‘FUIT.’ But the change which it is now undergoing ‘is not unto death,’ or into a stage of decay, but for the greatly

increased influence and prosperity of the institution, and for multiplied benefits to the Church.

Though it be a *theological* institution, and though theology has of late been declared to be separated from religion, and to be antiquated and obsolete (in the sense that it never ought to have lived, and, indeed, never would have lived except for the miserable credulity of the human race), yet the United Presbyterian Church, holding that theology is vitally associated both with spiritual and with practical Christianity, clings to theology, and earnestly supports the institution that has been organized to teach it to candidates for the ministry.

In representing the *past* of that Divinity Hall, which has exercised such a direct influence upon Scottish religion, the feeling of sadness would have been oppressive if that Hall were to have no *future*; or if, though not as yet defunct, it had a doubtful prospect. But we conclude, as we began our memorial, cheered by the assurance that the Hall has its brightest and most useful days *before* it.

The Synod, which has decided that the brief autumn session of the Hall shall be displaced by a long winter one, and that all the professorships shall be disjoined from pastoral charges, in order

that students may have the best possible teaching and training, will doubtless, in choosing the men who are to fill the three new professorships, have made such a selection as the interests of the students and the welfare of the Church demand. There never was a time when the highest ability for warning and arming young men for the defence of evangelical truth was so urgently called for as at present ; and, if the Synod have chosen professors who can only put broken weapons into the hands of those aspiring to the ministry, the mistake will have been woeful.

There is need—an instant, an undeniable need—of the grandest and fullest resources of commanding and versatile intellect, various learning, and consummate culture, being applied to and concentrated upon the preparation of those young men who are to be the Church's ministers. It cannot be disguised that now, and henceforth for an indefinite period, every theological professor will have to encounter, in the prosecution of his labours, such confounding difficulties and trials as were unknown to his predecessors in the previous century. At every moment, whether he be tracing the outlines and features of Christianity, or unfolding the evidences that attest the divinity of this religious system, of its Author, and of its authori-

tative Book, he will be constrained to fight—and not against the old forms and weapons of infidelity and heresy, but against new ones, that are far more sweeping, subtle, and deadly. The various sciences, that have received in our day a gigantic development, and reached a maturity which gives them a new audacity and strength, are—as employed by the most eminent of European sages—all and always against him ; and they will give no quarter to any fact, truth, or person that claims to be of supernatural origin or revelation ; and, through his defence of all that is distinctive or valuable in Christianity, they seek to send their shattering assaults. Those sciences, with their far-stretching arms, aim at grasping the length and breadth, the depth and height of the material universe ; and, instead of holding up a finger of scorn at the cosmogony and chronology of Moses, at Noah's ship-building, and at Joshua's commanding the day to lengthen itself, as they were wont to do, they now hurl against Christianity all the orbs of the sky and all the rocks of earth. The professor, when building up his theological system, and a wall of defence around it, may often—in the midst of crashing assaults from the high places of science—be visited by fear lest the doctrines and the evidences should begin to totter ; and he may have

a more frequent apprehension that the most highly gifted and the most eagerly inquiring among his pupils must be wavering in their faith, and that he will fail to remove their incipient doubts. Widely different is his position from that which was occupied by the Rev. William Wilson of Perth—the first professor in the Secession Divinity Hall!

Wilson held up, to his small band of students, the Bible as the divine and infallible ‘law and testimony;’ and from it he developed a complete and a minutely limbed, articulated, and featured body of Christian doctrine and duty, without either experiencing in himself, or communicating to any of those students, the least uneasiness or uncertainty about what he was doing. He taught, and they learned, with all the confidence which progress in mathematical instruction could give. He and they looked at his structure of a theological system with as little misgiving or doubt as if they had been considering the first of Euclid’s problems. Christian dogma was then living truth, which received entire and emphatic assent. His faith might show that the evangelical ‘mysteries’ were traced on a *dim* ‘mirror,’ but not that they were traced on a *cracked or broken* one, which could reflect no image. Neither the infidelity nor



the heresy of his times staggered his understanding, and produced, in his nature, sympathy or perplexity, for he was ready to meet them with a direct refutation and repulse. In opposing all their views and arguments, he had no traitor within the garrison—no paltering or hesitation within his own mind and heart. The unavowed though scarcely disguised Socinianism of the period, said to be prevalent among the Established clergy, was as impotent and unattractive as it was inconsistent and dishonest; and the fathers of the Secession could not less easily and triumphantly refute the ‘corrupt doctrine’ which was reported to be encouraged more or less within the Church of Scotland, than demolish all defences of lay-patronage and of the oppression and mal-administration which her several courts—from the lowest to the highest—were then committing. Wilson was generally appointed by his three brethren, who knew his ‘might and mastery’ in discussion, to draw up the protests and testimonies of the Secession; and whether he handled doctrine or church polity, confuting error or rebuking injustice, invariably he acquitted himself with admirable ease and vigour, and in a way which showed that his own belief in the cardinal facts and truths of the gospel had not been weakened by any of the

views and arguments of Socinianism, or even 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,' and that his mind was free from the uncertainty and unrest which now surround all theological thinkers and teachers. To him, Scripture texts were oracles that had lost nothing of their verity and divinity; but their *yea, yea*, and their *nay, nay*, were everlastingly and unchallengeably authoritative. His pupils, too, enjoyed the same happy freedom from doubt; and he spoke '*from faith to faith*,' for they received his exposition and defence of Christianity with his own unqualified satisfaction.

The only point upon which he might fail to satisfy those among his pupils who were eager inquirers, and upon which he did actually fail to satisfy the young Thomas Gillespie, was the COVENANTING obligation, — a very small point, which, while it shows the narrowness and bigotry of the views entertained by Mr. Wilson on the question of toleration, also demonstrates how undisturbed were he and his pupils by those doubts which, within the sphere of Christian culture, act with the appalling desolation not merely of an earthquake, but of a catastrophe that shakes the 'pillared firmament,' throws sun, moon, and stars from the sky, and scorches the sky into a scroll, — thus destroying the Christian revelation and Chris-

tianity itself, and reducing to vanity all the hopes of man in a grand and blessed hereafter!

Who cannot imagine, and who will not envy, the calm and simple confidence of the Perth ‘school of the prophets,’ conducting their study of theology with understandings open to the light, and submissive to the authority, of the Holy Scriptures? Wilson, the professor, in the midst of his little company of pupils, lectures and examines on the *Medulla* of Mark,—a text-book which would have been intolerable through its laboriously minute structure of dogmas, if dogmas had not been reverently treated as living realities growing out of the word of God. Professor and students alike rejoice in that elaborate system of Christian theology which a contemporary divine, disregarding the figure involved in the title of Mark’s work, has called ‘The Tree of Orthodoxy.’ They sit contemplating this ‘tree,’ of which not a single leaf, not the smallest dogma, is falling to the ground, but clings to the twigs as the twigs cling to the branches, and the branches cling to the grandly massive trunk, and the trunk, with its far-spreading and deep-striking roots, clings to the soil.

In contrast, where *now* is that, or any ‘tree of orthodoxy,’ except in the Confession of Faith?

We see the theological professor of our day in the midst of his students, while a storm of free-thinking and reckless criticism from all quarters and points is not only sweeping off the foliage, but shattering the twigs and boughs, breaking the branches, and rending and threatening to tear up by the roots the very trunk of systematic theology. The metaphor but weakly represents the altered position of a divinity professor, who no longer in his teaching speaks 'from faith to faith,' but from an indefinite and ever-shifting belief, which, though it have scarcely any fixed or central point, is somehow called 'Broad Churchism ;' and he speaks to young men whose volatile nature responds quickly to the spirit of the age against religious dogma, and in whom science tends to produce disbelief and scornful rejection of all the claims of a supernatural revelation.

The appearance of a Wilson of Perth, simply *redivivus*, even though he were reinforced by such successors as Brown of Haddington, Lawson of Selkirk, and Dick of Glasgow, to exhibit absolute calm and rest in this ever-changing and revolutionary age, would not meet the crisis. Those venerated theological guides knew their own times, and under their 'heat and burden' performed their proper work with rare fidelity and success. So

the theologians capable of leading and guarding themselves and their pupils, as holders and heralds of the Christian faith, through the scepticism of the last quarter, of the nineteenth century, must thoroughly know this age, and sympathize ardently with all of its characteristics that can directly or indirectly promote human progress. 'From the nettle *Danger* they must pluck the flower *Safety*.' Though vividly impressed with the dangers of modern travelling by steam, and even when hearing of the appalling railway accidents that so often happen, and of all the sickening details of the death and the mangling that are inflicted, nobody proposes to bring back the old steady coachman, that he may displace the engine-driver, and guide the steam-driven machinery with as much safety at forty or sixty miles an hour as attended the running of his horses at eight or ten miles an hour; nor is it ever suggested that the whole railway system, with its matchless accommodation for the travelling public, should be forthwith abolished, and the old coachman, with his team and his box upon wheels, once more placed upon the highway!

It will not be denied that Christianity and her institutions and ordinances have largely helped to make Scotland what she is; yet we are told that

those agencies are now exhausted and lifeless; nay, that all along they were purely fictitious, mere illusions, though through long centuries they maintained a hard-won and real ascendancy, and produced results both palpable and precious. Christianity is described as an inane superstition, in spite of all its influences and operations in the past; and being detected, it will vanish, along with priestcraft, into the limbo which received ghosts and witchcraft. It is predicted that before long there will not be in Scotland a single dogma, one stone of a kirk, or one stick of a pulpit; nor will there be, after his pulpit has crumbled down, the voice of a solitary preacher crying in the wilderness.

Yet, looking at Christianity in its present position of authority in Scotland, in its sway over genuine disciples, and its wider but more superficial influence over promiscuous society,—if we were to see it in the next age wholly abolished, this would be a marvel not less striking than when we contrast its present position with what it was when its Divine Author lay in the manger at Bethlehem, or when His infant Church was cradled in the mean ‘upper room’ at Jerusalem. To see Jesus Christ and His cause, that have so laid hold of the hearts and lives of countless countrymen and country-

women of every rank, condition, age, and order of intellect, and commanded their intense devotion,—to see Christ and His cause suddenly and scornfully expelled, as either a fable or an imposture, from every Scottish affection, aspiration, thought, and association, and from all Scottish speech, ceremonial, and action, would be a wonder not less notable than was their early and rapid progress from obscurity to wide rule; and another Gibbon would be needed to invent as many causes to account for the *annihilation* of the Christian faith, as he paraded reasons in explanation of its original *ascendancy*. We may be sure that Christianity is liable to no such danger of being at a blow struck out of the world; and that modern scepticism, though it were incomparably more powerful than it is, and though it had a vast host of men of genius wielding all the weapons that philosophy, science, and learning can furnish, will never be warranted to exult over Christianity in Cæsar’s *veni, vidi, vici* style!

To humanity, in the whole compass of its consciousness between the degradation in which it lies, yet from which it shrinks, and the high perfection to which it yearningly aspires, Jesus Christ is so indispensable, that, when once revealed, He can never be recalled, and when once

received, He can never be rejected ; nor will either a rival or a substitute be endured. 'The Christian religion,' says Thomas Carlyle, 'once here, cannot again pass away ; as in Scripture, so also in the heart of man is written, *The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it!* In every pure soul, in every poet and wise man, it finds a missionary, a new martyr, till the great volume of universal history is finally closed, and man's destinies are fulfilled on this earth. It is a height to which the human species were fated and enabled to attain ; and from which, having once attained it, they can never retrograde !'

Carlyle's statement, while true regarding the *human species*, finds a strange exception in the case of the *French people*, who, moved by Voltaire's wit and sneering, seem to have banished Christianity for a whole century, dooming themselves to meet, without a single Christian support in life and without a single Christian hope in death, all the horrible miseries and sufferings which have been inflicted during that long period by revolutionary frenzy and licence, military usurpation and despotism, insane aggression against Europe, and the crushing retaliation that Europe, and recently Germany, have exacted ! The French appear to have fulfilled within their own land their threat of



‘quashing that infamous religion ;’ but at what a tremendous cost to themselves, let their flagrant degeneracy testify. The intellect and heart of Scotland, however, have not received Christianity with *French* loyalty.

We know, indeed, that unprecedentedly numerous and formidable enemies have of late set themselves to demolish Christianity. We see the hosts that have been sent into the field by science, philosophy, and literature ; but it is not less strange than sad to mark that their most powerful and resolute allies are the men who, from their place on the watch-towers and battlements of the Church, should have been the champions of the faith which they so treacherously assail. Those churchmen seek to explode, as ignorantly or wilfully fabulous, all that is supernatural in the facts of the evangelical history ; and they reject the *corner-stone* fact of a special revelation either by God’s own Son or in God’s own Book, denying that—of what is called Christian doctrine—there was any divine unfolding, or for Christian morality any divine authority, through inspired teachers. They believe that Christianity and the Bible are in their origin merely human, and that the very little in both that is worthy of acceptance comes from unassisted human reason. Why, then, should there be a single ecclesiastical stone,

stick, or rag, in honour of such a mere nullity as that to which they reduce Christianity? Why any longer, at enormous cost, maintain, for the sake of that nullity, one day out of every seven, one church in every street, and one minister for every hundred or two of the population?

These destructive churchmen should never be identified or classed with the men who desire to have church creeds and confessions reduced from their all-embracing dogmatism to the brief simplicity of apostolic times, when Christianity did not bristle all over with innumerable points of orthodoxy as tests, but had charity for and communion with all who loved and followed the Master, and when the ties of brotherhood formed no coil of fetters for Christian liberty. Christian independence and charity must not be confounded with any movement hostile to Christianity, otherwise the apostles themselves might be called enemies to the very cause for which they were martyrs.

The subtlest and most searching scepticism is at work, but will it prevail? Universal science, the methodized knowledge of all the facts and laws of matter, however full and perfect it might be, can neither help nor hurt Christianity; for how can a purely spiritual system be proved or disproved by astronomy or geology? Astronomy has disclosed

a boundless plurality of worlds, but cannot throw a single ray of light upon the question if there be another and an unending life for man after death ; it cannot confirm or confute the Christian doctrine of a future state. Examine any of those supreme physical laws that are now almost worshipped as gods, and they have no oracle about a hereafter for the human soul. Geology gives us the earth's historical eras previous to the appearance of man, but is dumb regarding what Christianity teaches us about the creation, fall, and redemption of man ; it cannot say to these doctrines either yea or nay. Science cannot even demolish the miracles that have been recorded in connection with Christianity, since it knows nothing either as to how God interposed for the creation of man, or as to how God will interpose for the continuance and elevation of man's life into immortality at the moment of death ; and being wholly ignorant and silent about God's agency at these two crises of human destiny, science can say nothing about the divine manifestations at the stage of man's redemption—so that even of the incidental miracles, science cannot form a judgment as to their possibility or probability.

The culture which science gives can only make the mind *neutral* to Christianity ; but the broader

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and more generous culture which philosophy and literature, alongside of science, impart, will, we believe, tend to render the Scottish intellect more reverently appreciative of and more tenderly responsive to Jesus Christ as the one grand ideal and friend of humanity. It would shrink, with no less horror than from its own annihilation, from the vast and dreary void, spiritual, moral, and social, which would be caused by the withdrawal of the Christian faith. To all who expect to find in the next age Christianity exploded, it will be said: Christianity is not in the tomb,—it has risen into a higher and wider command over our nation, receiving a far more loyal homage from heart, lip, and life.

The views and predictions that have of late been so frequently intruded about the pulpit will, we believe, prove groundless. If PREACHING were either to be abolished or to be thrust into a corner, in order that, for æsthetic minds, fine music and an imposing liturgy might get ample room, no Church would need a Divinity Hall, and the enlargement and better equipment of the United Presbyterian Church institution would be altogether superfluous. Instead of a large and highly qualified theological faculty, a MUSIC ACADEMY would be wanted; and the design would be, not to rear for the pulpit such com-

manding orators as Whitefield or Spurgeon, Hall or Chalmers, but to train vocalists to be 'precentors,' and to place singing men and singing women in harmonious choirs.

When oratorios shall have been substituted for sermons, the 'school of the prophets' will be a school of precentors and choirs ; and Orpheus, exerting a universal attraction, will make a 'church-going' population. Then, on Sundays, in churches we shall have all such congregations as a taste for fine music has drawn out, listening in rapture to Handel's grand rendering of the words, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth salvation !'—and this after the *publishing* or *preaching* of salvation had wholly ceased, and the 'feet' of the messenger upon the 'mountains,' and even upon the 'mountain of the Lord's house,' were no longer visible or audible, except in Handel's musical echo ! Congregations delighting to celebrate, in Handel's sublime and impassioned music, the glory of that preaching which they had wholly abolished—what a spectacle for pity and laughter ! Is there any reason why they should then keep to *sacred* song and music ?

It may be doubted if, in the case of any classes of our population, the service of song, represented by

the most thrilling music, and performed by consummate artists, would, though it were associated with the noblest liturgy, succeed in drawing larger congregations than preaching. If preaching fail to attract crowds of hearers, we despair of the power of hymns—poured forth in the most exquisite strains of vocal and instrumental melody—to attract the smallest groups. What preaching, even when simple and without ornament, can do in this respect, was recently shown by the multitudes that flocked wherever the American revivalist, Mr. Moody, appeared. No such multitudes would ever attend the most magnificent concert of music; and if they did, they would but be moved for a little by admiration either for some individual performers, or for some succession of master-strokes in the performance itself; but how partial, slight, and transient would such emotions be, compared with the impressions left upon the many hundreds of thousands of Mr. Moody's hearers,—impressions, not about Mr. Moody and his faculties, or other insignificant personalities, but about God, Jesus Christ, and the soul of each of those hearers! Existing churches will not be filled *by*, and new churches need not be erected *for*, worshippers who acknowledge no other charm than music has.

Besides, if preaching were displaced by liturgies

and hymns, these contain the principal dogmas of Christianity, clearly and emphatically articulated. They are full of 'Hosannas' to 'David's Son and David's Lord;' and, bowing to no hypothetical divinity, they offer no equivocal homage. No double sense lurks midway in ambiguity, to start into contingent truth, either to swell into the worship of God, or to sink to the eulogy of a mere man. In liturgies and hymns, the Church has a 'quiver' full of 'arrows' against all the deniers of Christ's divinity and sacrificial death.

The worshippers, then, would soon feel constrained to eliminate from those venerable strains of prayer and praise all that was doctrinal, and all that should be left would be mere music. We have heard the late Mr. Cranbrook, after his repudiation of Christian doctrine, and his adoption of the barest Deism, 'leading the prayers' of his evening congregation. Apart from his obvious difficulty in keeping back the old and familiar terms of Christian phraseology, he—too plainly—was at a loss how fitly to address the 'Almighty Force.' What a vague, characterless, and meaningless service of adoration! The 'trees clap their hands,' and the 'floods lift up their waves,' in worship, and, however vague, this is all that we expect from them; but for a man, a clergyman, to place himself in that

speechless choir ! His prayer was a mere rushing wind ! Dr. Page, his successor, had obviously less difficulty. Having no old forms of Christian worship to unlearn, if he had even any prayers to forget, he did give forth curious specimens of devotion ; and his praying was like a steam-engine whistling.

We have no fear, however, that any reform in church service will result either in the discarding or in the degrading of the hitherto high and influential function of preaching. Divinity Halls for the training of aspirants to the pulpit will continue to be supremely important, if not altogether indispensable. They need not be alarmed about any rivalry from precentor or choir ; even the organ itself will fail to gain an ascendancy. The gospel must be preached to all nations and to 'every creature ;' and THEN only 'cometh the end' for preaching, when the end shall have come for the earth, and for the earthly destiny of mankind.

THE END.



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